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PRIMITIVE CHRISTIANITY

AND ITS CORRUPTIONS.

VOL. II.

DEPARTMENT OF PERSONAL RIGHTEOUSNESS.

A SERIES OF DISCOURSES

DELIVERED IN HOPEDALE, MASS.,

A. D. 1870–71,

BY ADIN BALLOU.

EDITED BY WILLIAM S. HEYWOOD.

"Which of you convinceth me of sin? And if I say the truth why do ye not believe me?" — *John viii. 46.*

"Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven." — *Matt. v. 20.*

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LOWELL, MASS.:
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PRIMITIVE CHRISTIANITY AND ITS CORRUPTIONS.

DEPARTMENT OF PERSONAL RIGHTEOUSNESS.

DISCOURSE I.

STATEMENT OF THE SUBJECT.

"I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven." — *Matt.* v. 20.

In the series of discourses composing the first volume of my projected work on PRIMITIVE CHRISTIANITY AND ITS CORRUPTIONS, I endeavored to set forth and illustrate the pure *Theology* of the Gospel of Christ, and to expose the principal features of it which, as time went on, were seriously misinterpreted, obscured, and perverted. In that upon the same general subject which appears on the pages of the present volume, I propose to render a similar service in behalf of the distinctive *Personal Righteousness* taught and exemplified by the Founder of our holy religion and his early Apostles. Primitive Christianity embodies an exceptional and distinctive type of personal righteousness, as it has an exceptional and

distinctive theological system declaratively inculcated or implied in its teachings and ministrations. Both are transcendently excellent, and are in strictest harmony with each other. There is no logical or moral discord in the whole Christian superstructure, as reared by its Master-builder, from foundation stone to the loftiest summit of its dome. Its theology is perfect, as I have before shown, in all its essentials; its personal righteousness is correspondingly without defect or cause of reprehension.

What then is the personal righteousness of Primitive Christianity? It is that which is clearly and unqualifiedly taught, exemplified, and enjoined by Christ and his Apostles, as declared and promulgated in the Scriptures of the New Testament. There is no other authentic source of historical information respecting this subject. Before proceeding to the consideration of its merits and requirements, however, we will give a little attention to the matter of definition and explanation. Let us understand what we are trying to discuss.

What then do we mean precisely by the expression, *personal righteousness?* Righteousness is a term derived from the primary word *right*, which is the verbal equivalent of straight or direct, as by line or rule, and, with its corresponding adjective, is used chiefly in religious speech and literature. When a person, people, law, principle, or course of conduct is called righteous, it is to be understood that the same is proper, allowable, or commendatory, because it is in accord with some acknowledged standard of moral worth. Righteousness denotes either justifiable action

or an incorrupt state of mind and heart. It signifies, when applied to persons, doing right and being right, according to the divine law of rectitude and honor. It is sometimes used in a lower, comparative sense; but I give it its higher, its absolute moral and religious meaning. The modifying term, *personal*, restricts the quality represented by the word righteousness to individuals — to responsible beings, whose action or inward state is determined and established by conscious choice. Personal righteousness is not predicated of minerals, vegetables, animals, or unintelligent human beings, or of masses of people governed by arbitrary compulsion alone, even though they be or do what is in itself just and lawful for the time being. It is predicated only of self-conscious, free moral agents, who, on the grounds of eternal justice, are accountable for what they do and for what they are. Hence we speak in this absolute and authoritative sense of the personal righteousness of God, of Christ, or of any man. The expression always implies responsible moral agency, voluntary action or condition of mind, and some rule, standard, or law of rectitude which is the test of moral quality and desert. Therefore, perfect personal righteousness must be the characteristic of a responsible being whose motive, thought, and conduct are, of his own consent and choice, conformed to a perfect law or standard, inhering in the nature of things or in the counsels and ordinations of an all-wise, all-holy, all-loving Creator and Governor of the world and all things therein. Such is God's personal righteousness; such is Christ's personal righteousness; and

such the ultimate and immaculate personal righteousness required of regenerate humanity — a righteousness after which every member of that humanity is to aspire and into the realization of which every such member is in duty bound, as far as possible, to come. Anything short of this would leave us and our entire race more or less in bondage to sin and misery, and so far unsaved.

And now the main question recurs: What is the unadulterated, distinctive personal righteousness of pure Primitive Christianity? What ought we to expect it to be in the divine order of the world as portrayed in the preceding volume of this work? We, therein, were made to see, theologically, that God is the all-perfect universal Father; that in His eternal purpose the destiny of mankind, without exception, is perfection and bliss; and that Jesus Christ is an all-sufficient mediator, commissioned to reconcile the human race to God, so that He shall finally "be all in all." We saw, too, that the great Creator caused mankind to come into existence on a low plane of intellectual and moral being, with their animal nature dominant over their spiritual; that consequently they are variously subject to sin and thereby brought into greater or less condemnation; and that adequate means and agencies were provided in the divine economy for rendering them ultimately holy and Christ-like in spirit, character, and conduct, through a gradual process of enlightenment, regeneration, and growth in the things of the divine life. This consummation, when reached, must present every one perfect in righteousness; — that is, voluntarily submissive and

obedient to the requirements of the divine law of love to God and man. So long as one soul remains unregenerate and disobedient, in overt act or in secret desire, the eternal purpose of the infinite Author of all things will not be fulfilled. The mediatorial and saving work of Christ is to reach and rescue all souls from the power of temptation and sin; to make every human being holy from the love of holiness; to mold every such being after the pattern of his own image, into the likeness of God. This achievement is necessarily of grace, through faith, repentance, and salutary discipline, for the reason that man neither originated nor deserved it by his own primal wisdom or worthiness. In its very nature such an achievement is deliverance from the love of sin into the love of righteousness, and would be of no avail unless it should bring those subject to it — ultimately all mankind — into a state of mind and heart in which their supreme delight, like that of Christ, should be to know and do the will of the heavenly Father in all things. In former expositions we have renounced as errors and corruptions all notions of Christ's saving work which in any wise imply that the saved are not rendered personally righteous in will, in purpose, and in conduct. Complete salvation produces as its legitimate fruit willing obedience to the divine requirements from the spirit of obedience within. No one can have experienced a perfect salvation, according to the Christian ideal, until he has become unreservedly consecrated to truth and duty of his own choice and as a matter of principle. So long as he transgresses the laws of his being,

which are the conditions of his happiness, whether by omission or commission, in thought or word or deed, he remains so far unsaved; is so far under condemnation; must so far suffer the miseries consequent upon his shortcoming or wrong-doing.

In this view of the case, we can clearly understand why Primitive Christianity requires perfect personal righteousness as indispensible to perfect happiness. It certainly does require this, as the final issue of the obligation which it lays upon the human soul. Not, however, as a condition upon which God manifests His love and grace to the children of men; for His love and grace are original, spontaneous, and unchangeable in Him, whatever be their moral state or deserving. Nor is it on the ground that God will accept no righteousness in any of us unless it be a perfect righteousness; for He accepts and rejoices in the humblest efforts of His frail and imperfect children to honor and serve Him; He approves and rewards the least and poorest expressions of righteousness in any and every human being, according to its real worth, as determined by the sincerity and sense of accountability which prompt it. The least good any fallible mortal may do is owned and commended of Him who judges impartially every subject of His moral government, as the least evil of the usually devout and upright receives His just condemnation and the punishment which is its rightful due. Nor is perfect personal righteousness demanded because God or Christ or the Apostles or any wise being in heaven or on earth expected its immediate attainment and exemplification by men; for divine wis-

dom knew from all eternity that this could be accomplished only after long and earnest struggle, severe moral discipline, and persevering progress in well-doing. But it is enjoined and insisted upon as an indispensable finality, and as an essential requisite to the ultimate universal harmony and bliss. We can never experience perfect joy—unalloyed felicity, as individuals or as a race, till we are perfectly righteous. The heaven or hell we may ever inhabit must be according to our possession or destitution of personal righteousness. This is the law of our being, the ordinance of God, and none can escape it. Our heavenly Father asks, indeed, our best performance of duty, but gives due credit for what we render, and causes us to take the legitimate consequences of our action, be it good or ill. We may choose to go to a given extent in acknowledging the claims and in practising the principles of righteousness, but no further. Very well. The great Judge of all the earth is not disappointed, nor is He thwarted in His purpose concerning us; nor is He out of patience with us, nor hopeless and disheartened in regard to our final destiny. But He sees to it that we reap as we sow. When we choose how much righteousness we will accept and exemplify and how much unrighteousness, let us at the same time remember and consider that we also, by the same act, decide how happy or miserable we must be as the consequence of such choice, and as our thoughts and acts yield their appropriate and inevitable harvest of good or ill, of joy or sorrow, to the soul. If not in time, then in eternity, we receive an equitable recompense for the

lives we lead and the characters we form and illustrate, whether it be of justification unto joy unspeakable and full of glory, or of condemnation into merited self-reproach and wretchedness. These are the plain teachings of Primitive Christianity; as they are of enlightened reason and human experience in all ages of the world's history.

And yet there is an almost universal disposition in Christendom to ignore or set at nought these teachings, at least, in their absolute and comprehensive form, both within and without the pale of the nominal Church — a widely-prevailing habit of lowering Christ's standard of personal righteousness in order to accommodate it to what is deemed possible, necessary, practicable, or expedient, under existing conditions and circumstances of human life on the earth. This is sometimes done by open denial of their truthfulness and authority, but more frequently by explaining away whatever in the Master's precepts and example seems too radical, stringent, or extreme for convenient practice; too high and holy to be available at the present stage of human development. Some do this on the naked plea that the Gospel requirements are at present utterly impracticable if not impossible, though admitting that they are right and true in the abstract, and destined to become the supreme rules of thought and conduct at some future period, in this world or the next. Others do it on the theological ground that we must not exalt works above grace in the divine economy of redemption, or infringe upon the doctrine of salvation by the merits of Christ by magnifying the importance of ordi-

nary human duty — of what are termed *good works*. Still others rely on exegesis and philology, or on the hypothesis of harmonizing New Testament ethics with those of the Old Testament, and in this way reducing the real significance of Christ's words to the low level of their worldly or carnal heart's desire.

But none of these pleas or excuses are admissible. We must be careful to ascertain the essential meaning of Jesus and his Apostles in all their recorded sayings, and to give these sayings a just construction. Having done this, we must be equally careful not to strain them in any direction from the line of their true purpose and intent. We must take them with all possible sincerity, in spirit and in substance as they are — as they came from the thought of their authors, not as our convenience, pleasure, prejudices, or wishes would have them to be. One of two things is certain ; either the personal righteousness enjoined by Christ and the early promulgators of his Gospel is higher, nobler, more perfect than that of Judaism or of any other known religion of the world, or it is of no distinctive, vital importance whatever, as *the* great power of moral and spiritual redemption among men. When one extols Christian piety and morality as pre-eminently excellent and glorious, yet reduces the Christian standard of duty to God and man to the same level with that of the Scribes and Pharisees, or with those of the Brahmins, Budhists, Mohammedans, Stoics, and worldly philosophers, he had better drop from his ethical vocabulary the differentiating term, *Christian* ; for he has robbed it of its essential

meaning. It has become to him a mere catchword ; sound, and nothing more.

But it is my province and present task to show that the personal righteousness of Primitive Christianity is *sui generis*, peculiarly and radically distinctive ; transcendently profound and of unrivalled excellence ; superior to that of any other religion or philosophy which has ever arrested the attention or received the approval and reverence of the human race. In doing this, I shall adopt the familiar method of considering personal righteousness under two heads, to wit : — Piety and Morality, and treat each of these branches of the main subject, respectively, by itself, and with all needful detail.

Piety, as I understand it, includes all duties relating especially or mainly to God and divine things ; morality, all duties relating especially or mainly to fellow-human beings and correspondingly created things. But whatever distinctions of the nature indicated are made for purposes of illustration and as an aid to the understanding, it is to be remembered that all the duties pertaining to personal righteousness, whether of piety or of morality, are one in their essential quality and belong to the same inseparable whole. They all have the same divine origin ; they rest upon the same impregnable foundations ; they are animated by the same vital spirit ; and they all tend to the promotion and achievement of the same grand object or consummation. They are designed and calculated to secure and make forever enduring the highest welfare and happiness of individuals, families, communities, townships, states,

and nations, aye, of the whole world of humanity; and, in their widest reach and dominion, of the entire universe of souls. Every morally right volition, desire, feeling, word, deed, or course of action, agrees with and tends to advance the greatest possible good of every sentient creature in the whole vast realm of existence. Nothing can be absolutely and everlastingly right which does not contemplate and regard this as its great crowning end and aim. All human duties originate in God, the infinite power, wisdom, goodness, — the great uncreated One, "of whom, through whom, and to whom are all things; and to whom be glory forever." As a sure and impregnable foundation, they rest upon, as they grow out of, the everlasting divine law and upon the immutable principles of the moral world, which show us that the universe is one and indivisible; that all beings and things belong to and form a part of the same complete whole; that they have a common origin, a common welfare, and a common purpose; and, consequently, that the highest good of each is the highest good of all and promotes the universal happiness; — while what harms one harms all beside and thrills with a pang of distress and woe the whole boundless hierarchy of sentient being. As a logical and moral correlative of this, the vital animating spirit which should pervade all the duties of life must be love; that love which "worketh no ill" to any but seeketh the good of all; which "suffereth long and is kind;" which "envieth not," "vaunteth not itself," "seeketh not her own," "thinketh no evil;" and which "never faileth."

Thus we find that in the wonderful constitution of the world and universe there is at the head of all beings and things, ruling over all and holding in His sure hand the destiny of all, the universal Father, loving all, caring for all, seeking the welfare and happiness of all; who alone is wise and far-seeing enough to perceive and to require what is necessary to the good and happiness of each individual soul and of the entire commonwealth of souls in this and in all possible worlds. Under Him, as the great mediatorial Teacher and the most authoritative Revealer of the Father's will and requirement, His is well-beloved Son, Jesus, who is called the Christ, resting all absolute personal righteousness upon and summing up all human duty in the two fundamental commandments, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."

Thus our theme opens before us as it were a vision of surpassing moral grandeur and sublimity. One supreme and all-perfect God, the universal Father, to be worshiped and adored; one vast family of moral and spiritual beings to be loved, benefited, and blest; one universal good to be sought and promoted; and one unspotted personal righteousness, as related to the Father and the great brotherhood, to be cherished and exemplified.

> "See the sole bliss Heaven could on all bestow!
> Which who but feels can taste, but thinks can know;
> Yet poor with fortune, and with learning blind,
> The bad must miss; the good, untaught, will find; —
> Slave to no sect, who takes no private road,

But looks through nature up to nature's God;
Pursues that chain which links th' immense design,
Joins heaven and earth, and mortal and divine;
Sees that no being any bliss can know,
But touches some above, and some below;
Learns from the union of the rising whole
The first, last purpose of the human soul;
And knows where faith, law, morals all began,
All end, in love of God and love of man."

"Self-love thus pushed to social, to divine,
Gives thee to make thy neighbor's blessing thine.
Is this too little for thy boundless heart?
Extend it; let thine enemies have part;
Grasp the whole worlds of reason, life and sense,
In one close system of benevolence;
Happier as kinder, in whate'er degree,
And height of bliss but height of charity.
God loves from whole to parts; but human soul
Must rise from individual to the whole.
Self-love but serves this virtuous mind to wake,
As the small pebble stirs the peaceful lake;
The center moved, a circle straight succeeds,
Another still, and still another spreads;
Friend, parent, neighbor, first it will embrace,
His country next, and next all human race;
Wide and more wide th' overflowings of the mind
Take every creature in, of every kind;
Earth smiles around, with boundless bounty blest,
And Heaven beholds its image in his breast."

— *Pope.*

DISCOURSE II.

PRIMITIVE CHRISTIAN PIETY: PART 1.

"The hour cometh and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in Spirit and in truth; for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." —*John* iv. 23, 24.

All religions proclaim a God. All religions enjoin divine worship; that is, acts and exercises of devotion and praise. All religions require piety of their confessors; in other words, they declare obligations to God to be met, and duties to be discharged toward Him. The Primitive Christian religion is like others in these respects. It also enjoins and requires many of the *same* obligations and duties prescribed by other religions, especially that of Moses and the Jewish prophets. It gives no countenance or support to any form of Atheism, Pantheism, Agnosticism, or irreligious skepticism and indifference. It does not resolve the Diety into an impersonal, unintelligent, infinite abstraction; nor represent Him as mere force, without conscious will or purpose in His activities; nor regard Him as blind, passionless law, with no interest in, thoughtfulness for, or love of, the beings and things which come into existence and are preserved through His agency and care. It does

not teach the inutility of forms of worship, of prayer, and exercises of devotion; nor make the religious impulses and aspirations, native to the soul of man, aimless and meaningless in respect to the Eternal One. Its God is a real, living being — the uncreated, omnipresent, omnipotent, all-wise, all-loving Father Spirit. The manifestations of its piety are definite, positive, unmistakable. But that piety has certain peculiarities — certain transcendent excellences, which distinguish it from that of any and all other religions, and which make it superior to that of any and all others; not as to its original essence and elementary basis in human nature, but as to its spirit and modes of practical expression in the characters and lives of men and in the religious institutions of the world. It seems to me to include all that is good in the piety of other religions, to exclude all that is evil or mischievous in them; also to correct the errors they embody and supply their deficiences; in short, to be a perfect piety. What then are its distinguishing peculiarities and excellences? I answer,

1. It is a perfectly rational piety. It is in happy accord with the perfect theology already considered and approved, and with the impartial and incontrovertible conclusions of an enlightened understanding. It has in it nothing of meaningless formality, superstition, or fanaticism. The profoundest impulses of the religious sentiment and the freest decisions of the unbiased judgment blend harmoniously in its normal manifestations. The God and Father whom it recognizes and adores is faultlessly worthy of the love, worship, and devotion it cheerfully and spon-

taneously renders to Him, while the motive, spirit, use, and method of every duty it embodies, exert a most purifying and elevating effect upon the hearts and lives of men.

2. The primitive Christian piety is characterized by unaffected sincerity, simplicity, and spirituality. It acts from pure love, reverence, and conscientiousness towards God, and discharges its various duties to Him, not to be seen and honored of men, not with worldly pomp and display, not with hypocritical or merely formal sanctimoniousness; but always in spirit and in truth, independently of time, place, circumstance, or artificial accompaniment.

3. It is a thoroughly radical, comprehensive, and uncompromising piety. It is not superficial and time-serving, assumed for occasions and designed to hide unseemliness and guilt; but it goes down to the very roots of human nature — to the center of motive, thought, purpose, and action, to make them pure and irreproachable. It extends its divinely authorized sway over all human affections, wills, reasoning faculties, and over all the conscious, voluntary exercise of those endowments, to hold them steadfast to high aims and subservient to God's holy will. It allows no rival to the divine Ruler of the world in any department of human responsibility. He is supreme in all things. No man can serve two masters. Such is the decree of primitive Christian piety, and so sweeping and imperative is the obligation it lays upon the souls of men.

4. It is a purely unselfish piety on God's part — is never required for His sake, as though He needed

anything; never as profiting Him at man's expense; but always as necessary to the welfare of man; — never as an end in itself, but as means to a grand moral end — the highest individual, social, and universal good.

5. It is a perfectly philanthropic, humane, beneficent, and Christ-like piety. It requires man so to exercise himself in all its duties that he may become thereby, in spirit, in character, and in conduct, like his God, like his Savior, and like the angels in heaven. It teaches that one cannot love God and hate, despise, injure, or neglect his fellow-men; that as he treats them he will be judged to have treated his and their heavenly Father; and that all the forms and ceremonies of worship, faith, or devotion in which he may engage, are to be regarded as solemn mockery if he does not love and seek to bless those about him and all mankind; if he obey not the second great commandment as well as the first.

That I have not stated these distinctive peculiarities of Primitive Christianity too strongly is evident from the recorded sayings and examples of Christ and his Apostles. Let us examine a few of these and see if I am correct; beginning with the remarkable conversation between Jesus and the woman of Samaria as given in the fourth chapter of John's Gospel. Our text is an essential part of it. The question of the proper place of worship was introduced by the latter. "Our fathers worshipped in this mountain," (Gerizim) she remarked, "and ye say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to

worship"; the implication being that it must be rendered in some consecrated locality,—in some temple reared for such service. But the divine Teacher replies, Not so, not exclusively or necessarily here or there. God is not a bodily presence, localized for the adoration of His creatures in some sacred mount or sanctuary. Neither is He a despotic, deific sovereign, exacting burdensome sacrifices of his subjects. "God is a Spirit," everywhere present, and the all-loving Father of Spirits. "The hour cometh and now is when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father seeketh such to worship him." Wherever thou art, O man, there God is—above, around, within thee—thy Father and thy Friend. Be honest and truthful with thyself, desiring to see thyself and all things only in the light of His countenance; then will thy Father make thee conscious of His presence wherever thou art, and there thou mayest worship Him acceptably.

Paul's testimony is to the same effect. In his bold, impressive discourse on Mars Hill, as reported in the seventeenth chapter of the book of Acts, he said: "God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands, neither is worshiped with men's hands as though he needed anything, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; and hath made of one blood all nations of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed and the bounds of their habitation; that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him

and find him, though he is not far from any one of us; for in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring." — *Acts* xvii. 24–28. Such inspiring and uplifting doctrine is worthy to be inscribed in letters of sunlight on the face of the skies.

But hear Jesus again: "When thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are; for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily, I say unto you they have their reward: But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret, and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly. But when ye pray, use not vain repetition as the heathen do, for they think they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be not ye therefore like unto them; for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of before ye ask him." — *Matt.* vi. 5–8. The real spirit and meaning of this passage are to the effect that we are not to foolishly think we can give information to God or move Him by sounding words, a multitude of phrases, and empty repetitions. He knows all things and is always disposed to bless His earthly children. The use of prayer is not to instruct Him, not to change His disposition or His purpose, nor to induce Him to do what otherwise would be left undone, but to put one's self into accord with His holy will and into communion with His spirit, that He may be enabled to receive, appreciate, enjoy, and magnify His divine

goodness and become the agency or medium for communicating that goodness to others and for making it triumphant on earth as it in heaven. Following this instruction is that model form of adoration and petition commonly called *The Lord's Prayer*, which though brief, is most comprehensive and significant; so much so as to receive the reverent admiration of enlightened Christians in all lands and times, and of many devout souls beside.

In the same connection Jesus also said, "Moreover, when ye fast, (a mode of worship in his day) be not as the hypocrites of a sad countenance; for they disfigure their faces that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily, I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thy head and wash thy face, that thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly." — *Matt.* vi. 16–18. Nothing in the various observances and exercises of devotion is more justly reprehensible in the estimate of rational, truth-loving minds, or more odious to pure and spiritually-quickened hearts, than sanctimonious display, artificial devices, unnatural tones, cant phrases, meaningless genuflections, and the whole long-drawn-out routine of hollow, illusory solemnities. Ignorant and superstitious mortals may be deluded and even awe-stricken by such exhibitions, but not intelligent and truly devout men and women. To such they are an offense, as they are to God. Jesus was pre-eminently reverent and prayerful; but his praying and reverential formalities were observed for the

most part in secret — in the solitude of his closet or of his own heart, or in some mountain retreat when he was alone with his Maker; in strict conformity to his preceptive teachings. In public he avoided all fictitious religious appearances, all sanctimonious airs, and was a living illustration of simple, unaffected, earnest, natural piety. No wonder then that he rebuked the popular religionists of his day for their notoriously ostentatious and hypocritical forms and expressions of reverential feeling and faith in God, and that he imperatively charged his followers to shun their evil examples; as when he said, "The Scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses' seat; all therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do, but do not ye after their works, for they say and do not." "All their works they do to be seen of men. They make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments, and love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, and greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi. But be not ye called Rabbi (Master) for one is your Master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren." "He that is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." — *Matt.* xxiii. 2, 3, 5–8, 11, 12.

But while Jesus denounced all forms of pompous and pretentious devotion, all false and arrogant assumptions of religious interest and zeal, he by no means underestimated the importance of the truly devotional spirit or suffered his disciples to content

themselves with a barren, semi-atheistic, unreligious secularism, as if that was sufficient for all man's moral and spiritual needs, and for the attainment of the great ends of existence, as contemplated in the primal and grandly beneficent purpose of the infinite Creator. How did he magnify and emphasize the first great commandment, closely connecting it with the second, and linking the two in indissoluble relationship as indispensable concomitants of each other and equally essential parts of the great whole of human duty and obligation! A certain Pharisee captiously asked him on a particular occasion, "Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it; Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." — *Matt.* xxii. 36–40. Here we have the primitive Christian piety placed in its proper relationship to true and pure morality. The two are expressed in simplest terms, made to blend in perfect harmony together, and seen to be divinely ordered counterparts or complements of each other. The heart represents the emotional department of human nature — the affections or love-powers — the desires, impulses, ambitions, passions, that cluster in the breast. The soul may be regarded as standing for the department of the will — for those powers and capacities which are employed in determining one's life-ideals and in shaping to them the character

and destiny. While the mind typifies man's intellectual capacities — reflection, reason, the judgment, and the understanding. So we see that Christ's piety implies and demands the exercise of each and all of the endowments or possibilities resident in these several departments of one's being, the affections, the judgment, and the will, in the direction and for the development of love to God. No one of them is to be selfishly employed, or allowed to set itself up as an idol, to which any or all others are to bow in subjection. All are to be regulated and controlled by a loving, reverent giving of themselves to God.

Loving God, moreover, implies not merely admiration for His being and personality, but for His moral attributes, qualities, and character; for His will, law, and government; in fine, for all that is heavenly and divine; for all beings and things that He loves; — it is, in fact, coming into the mind and heart of God and sharing His intrinsic life. It implies furthermore, confidence in His goodness, wisdom, providence — a trust that knows no doubt or fear. Hence the injunction; "Be not over-anxious, saying, what shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or wherewithal shall we be clothed? For your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." — *Matt.* vi. 25, 32, 33. In that blessed assurance the truly pious heart finds peaceful content and joy unspeakable. So it was with Christ. Seeking not his own will but the will of Him that sent him, resisting all temptations

to mere self-gratification, giving himself in a grand disinterestedness to the work of uplifting and redeeming the world, holding conscious fellowship with his Father and our Father, he could say even in the face of the dreadful cross, "Not my will but thine be done." And the subordinate teachers of the Gospel followed their great Leader, in this regard, with conscientious fidelity, as their preserved testimonies abundantly prove. These are all summed up in the exhortation of the chiefest of them all. "Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily as unto the Lord, and not unto men." — *Col.* iii. 23.

It appears finally from what has been said that primitive Christian piety neither implies nor requires on the part of the truly devout anything except what will help and bless both the souls and bodies of mankind. All are to prove themselves to be the true, filial, dutiful children of the infinite Father, by being true, loving, helpful, brethren of each other. This is clearly taught in the solemn dramatic parable of the judgment, which makes mercy and helpfulness to needy, suffering humanity the ground of divine approval, and the neglect thereof the ground of condemnation. The judge in that impressive scene assumes the self-forgetting, generous attitude of oneness with the humblest of those before him; saying, Inasmuch as ye did it, or did it not, unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it, or did it not, unto me, and retributive sentence of approbation or of reprobation, of reward or of punishment, is passed accordingly. And John, the beloved disciple, who seems to have entered more fully into the heart of Christ

than any of his fellows, gives us the consensus of the Apostolic teaching to the same effect, in the striking passage; "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar. For he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" —*John* iv. 20.

Such is the transcendently excellent and perfect piety of Primitive Christianity as I find it taught and exemplified by Jesus and his Apostles. It will receive further explication and illustration in my next discourse.

What mind illumed by reason's quickening rays,
What heart inspired by heaven-descended grace,
What soul that lives to noble aims and ends,
But piety so pure and true commends!
No empty, lifeless forms it consecrates,
Nor superstition's altars decorates;
No grim austerity doth it approve,
But pure devotion winged by faith and love.
All solemn artifice that cheats the crowd,
All costly pageantry to please the proud,
And all display that courts the gaze of man,
It deems perverse and puts beneath its ban.
No narrow superficial claim it makes;
No liberty with human folly takes;
But sways its royal scepter far and wide,
Wherever feelings stir or thoughts abide,
Commanding mind and heart and soul and will,
As unto God, all duties to fulfill.
The love of man is joined to love of God,
Owning the sacred bond of brotherhood;
And no one can the Father's smile receive
Whose malice, scorn, and hate, his fellows grieve;
For those who serve and worship him aright,
Must in the good of all mankind delight.

O blessed Christ, whose words and actions taught
A worship with supernal honors fraught,
When shall thine own ideal Church arise
To lead the world to thee — to harmonize
Our warring race, and with thy holy leaven
Of grace and truth, make of this earth a heaven?
Give thou us minds that we may clearly see
What are the duties that we owe to thee;
And hearts of love, to work and watch and pray;
Helpers of thee, to bring that triumph day
When all earth's divers kingdom shall be thine,
Replete with holiness and bliss divine.

DISCOURSE III.

PRIMITIVE CHRISTIAN PIETY: PART 2.

"I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God." — *Rom.* xii. 1, 2.

The mercies of God are so tender, loving, innumerable, and universal, that, if we could justly comprehend and appreciate them, we should instinctively and spontaneously love Him with all our hearts, and devote ourselves, soul and body, with every faculty of our natures, a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto Him. And this would seem to us "our reasonable service." It would under such circumstances be our highest ambition and supreme endeavor, not to conform ourselves to this world's desires, customs, fashions, and multiform idolatries, but to be transformed in our ruling loves, principles, and spirit, by true regeneration so as to prove, experimentally and practically, the perfection of God's will. That will is infinitely benevolent and wise. It is the only reliable guide to virtue and happiness; because it is the only sure and trustworthy indication of what is for the highest permanent good of His creatures, individually, socially, collectively, and universally. The

pure primitive Christian piety assures us that it is supreme over all creature wills, and requires us to reverence it with the profoundest love, confidence, and devotion. I, therefore, in the preceding discourse, pronounced it a perfect piety, giving a partial exposition of it and promising farther elucidation and illustration in the present one. I can best fulfill this promise, perhaps, by considering explicitly how it supplies the deepest wants of human nature and how indispensable it is to the salvation of the world from sin and misery, and to its ultimate attainment of universal holiness and happiness.

What then, I ask to begin with, are the deepest wants of our nature? To know what is absolutely right and best for us, all things considered; to be established from principle in the love of what is right and best above every competing attraction, and to obtain the spiritual strength necessary to act out our highest convictions of duty, in regard thereto. Many are ignorant of what is right and best, and so offend and are miserable. Others though more enlightened are not principled in the love of what is right and best, and so rush headlong or slide imperceptibly but surely into sin and wretchedness. Others still fail of holiness and happiness, through inability to resist temptation, to act up to noble convictions, and to overcome evil in themselves and others with good. Now true Christian piety supplies these several wants as nothing else can. How? By bringing us into vital communion with an all-perfect heavenly Father who knows what is absolutely right and best for us, who delights in communicating that

knowledge to us, who is constantly by His spirit seeking to influence us to the love of it, and whose own divine strength for the attainment of the highest and noblest objects in life is always available to supplement and reinforce our mortal weakness. Therefore, to love Him with our whole heart, soul, and understanding, so that we have no rival love for any being or thing, but confide implicitly in Him, bringing us into living relations with Him, insures our progress in holiness and happiness unto final perfection. It is thus and only thus that we can be prepared to receive that spirit which will lead us into all divine truth and become our ever-present Guide, Reprover, Sanctifier, and Comforter. Discarding this piety, we cut ourselves loose from our heavenly Father, ignore or contemn our natural filial relationship to Him and the help we thereby derive from Him, and rely upon our own self-sufficiency. The result must needs be failure. For the simple reason that our *self*-sufficiency is *in*sufficiency. All the faculties and capabilities of our nature were derived from God, are not self-existent, are finite and dependent, and have no inherent ability either to sustain or wisely regulate themselves. Every one of them is good in itself if kept in its proper place and held to its proper office; but productive of evil if disorderly and out of place, according to the extent of abuse. And the only safeguard against abuse is this very piety which binds us with indissoluble bonds of reverential love to our heavenly Father, so insuring us a supply for our deepest wants in this regard — the needful restraint and guidance — by the unobstructed

influx of His holy Spirit. Whatever prevents or hinders this divine inflowing from the source of all good, as reliance on our own sufficiency does, works mischief and misery to us.

This leads us to consider how indispensable the piety of Christ is to the salvation of the world. Why is there so much wretchedness and woe in the world? Primarily and chiefly because of the sinfulness therein. And why so much sinfulness? For the reason that mankind are alienated from the one only living and true God and wedded to idols. And what are those idols? There are legions of them. Whatever we prefer to our heavenly Father is an idol to us; our real deity. For we cannot serve two or more masters. The one we hold dearest rules us — is our idol. It may not be an image of wood, stone, or precious metals, after the fashion of heathen peoples; nor any being or thing formally consecrated as an object of worship; yet none the less is it an idol. It demands what the Most High forbids, and we reverence and obey it more than we do Him. It competes with Him for our hearts, and we give them to it rather than to Him. It conflicts with His will and we yield it the homage which is His due. Everything of this nature is practical idolatry, whatever professions we make or ceremonies we keep.

Pagan Rome had a splendid temple called the Pantheon; that is, the Sanctuary of all the Gods; deemed by Pliny one of the wonders of the ancient world. The recognized divinities of the then prevailing polytheism were represented in its images or symbols. Modern civilization claims to have out-

grown all forms of mythologic superstition, especially the worship of idols. But it has only metamorphosed and somewhat refined the idolatry of bygone days. What are the popular egoism and the multiplied forms of self-seeking it engenders and represents but a vast Pantheon subjectively existent in the human mind, wherein unnumbered false gods are set up and adored? But let me particularize somewhat and bring to notice some concrete examples of what I have in my mind regarding the idolatry of modern life, and,

1. What is Pleasure but a many-faced idol, receiving continually the adulation and homage of immense throngs of votaries? By pleasure, I mean, not innocent reaction or amusement, not the reasonable gratification of any natural desire, taste, or emotion of the human mind, heart, bodily sense, or appetite, held to its legitimate uses; but that artificial self-exhilaration, or delight which comes of some temporary excitation of feeling or stimulant out of the line of the divine order of the world, and not consonant with the permanent good and happiness of him who experiences it or of others. Nor do I mean that satisfaction and enjoyment which are subordinate to and harmonious with the will of God, the love of righteousness, and the joy-crowned fruits of well-doing. But I mean pleasure for its own sake, as the leading object of human pursuit and the great end of life. To seek pleasure after this fashion is what I deem a reprehensible form of idolatry, what I call pleasure worship. Is not the world, even in its most advanced portions, permeated with this

unhallowed devotion to false ideals — with this worship of a false and treacherous divinity? Behold the wide-spread eagerness to see and hear some new and fascinating thing, to furnish the appetites and tastes with some fresh gratification, to multiply the means by which the desires, the imaginations, the passions of men are indulged and enchanted! What multitudes seem to live chiefly to be entertained, amused, or regaled with some sport, game, play, or other form of merry-making, as if life was a gala-day, a frolic, a masquerade; a revel, perhaps a carousal, a saturnalia, and not a rich boon from the Giver of all good, a solemn trust freighted with grave and grand responsibilities, a field for noble service and lofty endeavor, a glorious opportunity for gaining, by the way of duty and sacrifice, of love to God and man, immortal honors and rewards.

Beside the natural wants of man, which, in the divine economy, are duly provided for, such provision affording ample opportunity for legitimate and guileless enjoyment, a host of artificial ones have been created by the fertile ingenuity of the human mind, adding nothing to the diginity, worth, or glory of the noblest product of the handiwork of God, but rather detracting therefrom; many of them clamorous as hungry wolves for their appropriate satisfaction and its attendant relish and delight. Among these are found marvelous varieties of the distinctive forms of idolatry under notice, from the most vulgar, brutish, and repulsive, to those that are highly intellectual, refined and aesthetic, and hence less worthy of reprehension. On the one hand, we behold

drunkenness, gluttony, and debauchery; bull-baiting, prize-fighting, and horse-racing; — on the other, epicurean feasting, genteel revelry, and fashionable display; sensational literature, empty oratory, and even religious buffoonery and jugglery.

By such agencies as these and through such instrumentalities does pleasure exercise its ignominious sway and hold fast to itself its willing, deluded devotees. For the time being, pleasure overrides all other considerations and reigns a god supreme.

And with what results? What are the fruits of these manifold forms of diversion and pleasure seeking? Disease of body, unsoundness of mind, perversion of the moral sensibilities — a partial or total degradation of character, and a greater or less disqualification for the higher pursuits and the more sacred responsibilities of life. Not infrequently is it ignorance, poverty, vice, crime, wretchedness, manifold forms of human debasement, a loosening of the bonds of domestic and social order, a letting down of the moral and religious tone of the community, a sensible deterioration of both private and public character in general society and throughout the body politic; universal demoralization.

And what is the remedy? A penitent return to the Father like that of the prodigal in the New Testament story — the piety which Christ taught and exemplified. We must learn that self-denial, privation, toil, and pain are often better for us than pleasure — that we must even abstain in order to enjoy; that the cross ensures the crown; and that

God's righteousness must be held supreme over all other claims and delights.

2. We next come into the presence of another great idol with its multitude of worshipers, viz.: self-will. Proclaim God's will, law, and order — absolute right and the highest good of all beings, and there is protest if not rebellion. In every direction dissent arises, saying in thought if not in words; "I know best; I have a will of my own; I shall take my own course and risk the consequences; I am not to be crossed, bridled, restrained; I am bound to live as I please." To one thus minded, religion is nothing, reason is nothing, the bitter experiences of a thousand generations are nothing, Christ is nothing, God himself is nothing. Against the conceit and self-deification of such persons the most solemn considerations are of no account. They rush upon their own destruction and are overwhelmed with misery before they can be brought to say in humble submission "Not my will but thine, O God, be done." Yet there is no salvation for them without coming to this. To worship the selfish will-god is a calamitous infatuation.

3. Popularity, or Love of Applause, is another deceitful, dangerous idol; less malignant and odious than self-will but more seductive and enslaving in its influence over its myriads of devotees. To be admired by fellow-beings, to be distinguished among them, to have their commendation and praise, seems to be one of man's organic loves, a ruling passion in his breast. No doubt it is a good impulse in itself and has a sphere of rightful exercise and of worthy

use in human life. But that must be in strict subordination to the divine law and to the highest, most comprehensive good. The moment it transcends this limit it becomes a bewitching idol. And such it is to multitudes in almost every department of individual and social life. Given supremacy, it is prolific of a vast bevy of evil ambitions and emulations; of servile conformity to hurtful fashions, customs, and habits; of vain and extravagant display; of rivalry, intrigue, and deceit; of pompous parade and hypocrisy; and sometimes of ridiculous sycophancy and clownish dissimulation. We find more or less of it almost everywhere, in all grades of society, among all kinds of people. Its ruling motive is "to be seen of men"; to be noticed, applauded, honored, rendered popular, or perhaps notorious. It loves the praise of men more than the approval of God and a good conscience. "It prefers," as Lord Mansfield says, "the shouts of a mob to the trumpet of (immortal) fame." What are its fruits? Artificiality, duplicity, hypocrisy, demoralization, — manifold forms of vice and consequent misery. And mankind are to be saved from this kind of idolatry and its attendant evils only by the power of that pure piety which exalts God above all other objects of worship, and deems His approval of more value than all possible human admiration, applause, and glorification.

4. Another conspicuous idol of our day and time, disputing the supremacy of the Infinite Spirit, is Wealth, known in heathen mythology as Mammon, to whom America in large degree and all the world

payeth homage. Jesus truly said "Ye cannot serve God and Mammon"; and Paul as truly called covetousness, another name for mammon-worship, idolatry. Every one seems ready to condemn and denounce this form of impiety, but few are ready to forsake it. Like the fox in the fable men cry "sour grapes" respecting wealth beyond their reach, but clutch with eager grasp all that they can lay hands upon. Nevertheless, when avarice, or love of money, or greed of worldly gain, sets God, His righteous law, and the welfare of mankind at nought, it is fraught with great peril to character and to the higher interests of society. "God and his righteousness" must be sought first, and property of whatever sort, earthly possessions, afterward. We must neither acquire, hoard up, or expend money or other goods in contravention of the requirements of the two great commands, of the golden rule, of our own and our family's permanent good, or of the good of any human being. If this leaves us no liberty to idolize property, or to wrongfully obtain or use it, this is just what the primitive piety of the Gospel suggests, what we all need, and what the world must come to in order to its salvation from that type of selfishness which the worship of mammon represents, and which is one of the chief causes of human degradation and misery. In that blessed consummation which will realize to every man the adequate supply of his every necessity and bind all the race of man together in the bonds of a common brotherhood, all material possessions will be regarded as belonging virtually to God, to be husbanded and disposed of by men as His

stewards, in such a way that none shall suffer want and none have or desire more than they can use wisely for the promotion of their own and others good, for the dissemination of the truth, and for the building up of the divine kingdom on the earth.

5. Men make an idol of Power,— of dominion and authority over fellow-human beings. They not only admire, honor, pay homage to those who occupy positions of authority, dictation, and command, but aspire to such positions for themselves. The desire to govern, to bear rule, to exercise control over others, is a very strong passion in many people; and to do so not by reason, persuasion, personal influence and example, or scrupulous adherance to what is true and right, but by arbitrary power, by autocratic domination, by artful cunning, by shrewd management, or, if need be, by sheer compulsion, threats of violence, or, in the last resort, by the iron hand; for purposes of self-exaltation and to gain a wider and more absolute sway. This idolatry finds notable exemplification in despots and tyrants, both on thrones and in social life, in aristocrats and demagogues, in party leaders and aspirants for office on the common plane of political ambition and strife. Devotees at this shrine must be at the top, must occupy places of dominion, must govern, by fair means or foul, open or covertly, singly or in company with others. Their determination is to rule, to carry their own particular plans or measures, to secure what they deem right, proper, expedient; "peaceably if they can, forcibly if they must." Such idolatry as this is largely prevalent. But it is not consistent

with the perfect love of God and man. It is not consistent with the idea of human brotherhood. It is not consistent with any of the larger interpretations of the Christian Gospel. It is of the carnal mind, not of the spiritual. This world, under the impulse of worldly ambitions and purposes, will have it so; and having it so, millions suffer and groan under the burden of those monstrous sins and sorrows which such idolatry — such ambitions and purposes generate and perpetuate. And there is only one remedy — only one way of salvation for those thus affected; the embrace and exemplification of the piety of Christ, in conformity with the spirit of the precept, "Whosoever will be great among you let him be your servant." — *Matt.* xx. 27.

6. Closely related to the particular type of idolatry just spoken of — that of personal exaltation and dominion — is that of blind devotion to the interest, will, exaltation, and glory of groups of fellow-creatures to whom we are strongly attached and with whom we are closely connected by some natural or organic relationship. The most prominent of these attached and closely related groups are the family, the social club, the philanthropic or other order, the political party, the church or denomination, the state, and the nation. These several groups may be and are in themselves natural, innocent, and justifiable. In all of them there are duties which God lays upon those forming them, from the least of them to the greatest, and from all conditions and classes of human beings. All such duties, however peculiar and special, are consistent with all other duties,

whether towards God, man, or the universe. If they are more immediately beneficent to some, they are remotely so to others, and, while injuring none, promote the good of all. The scrupulous performance of them is therefore loyalty to God and the dictate of true piety. But when love and devotion to family, club, order, party, church, state, or nation, take the place of and supersede loyalty to God and to the absolute, eternal, divine law, so that we support, stand by and defend them, *right or wrong*; when we are led to lie, defraud, extort, persecute, injure, maim, kill, or in any way disobey God and set His law at defiance for their sake, what are we but idolaters of a most pronounced and reproachable type! And what are these associated organic bodies but the real idols of our hearts, whom we worship and adore to the practical exclusion from His proper throne of the great Ruler of the world and Father of the spirits of all flesh? Is not the world thereby contaminated, perverted, led far astray from the true object of worship and from its own real well-being and happiness? And is not the piety of Christ indispensably necessary to its deliverance in this regard?

7. One more group of the world's idols I must not omit to mention — the most grim, horrible, and deceitful of all. Chiefest of those forming this group are brute force, deadly combat, warlike heroism, destruction of enemies, vindictive punishment, persecution of heretics, penal infliction, and physical violence under various injurious forms. These false gods are worshiped more or less slavishly by almost the entire human race. Hence war, wrath, cruelty,

and all manner of terrible evils kindred thereto, roll their dark, angry billows over the four quarters of the globe, deluging the earth with blood and destroying uncounted multitudes of the children of men. The abominations, the calamities, the miseries thus caused cannot be estimated by human calculation. God, by His son Jesus Christ, forbids all this hateful, deplorable idolatry. But the world, even the most civilized portions of it, still clings to it tenaciously, unwilling to abandon it, unwilling to be taught a better way. It delights in this state of things, preferring it and the spirit of barbarism which gives it birth to that required perfect love of God and man which worketh no harm to any one, which suffereth long and is kind, and which overcomes evil only with good. The pure piety of Christ is the only remedy for this almost universal adoration and homage paid to brute force and its kindred deities, and an essential pre-requisite to the bringing in of the long-deferred reign of amity, brotherhood, and peace.

It is the same cure-all that is needed for all the multiform idolatries that have supplanted the worship of the one only living and true God in the experience of mankind and multiplied the agonies and desolations that afflict the world. Whatever men love and serve instead of their heavenly Father as first and foremost in their regard, enslaves, degrades, imbrutes them, and renders them miserable. Where their treasures are, their hearts are, and there they themselves are, soul and body, "worshiping the creature more than the Creator" — wretched idolators, piercing themselves through with many sorrows. What

we worship fashions our characters and rules our lives. If we worship the One supreme Perfect All-Father we are clothed upon with His divine attributes, we take upon ourselves His image, we enter into His life and His peace, and His life and peace enter into us. If we worship the idols I have named or any other, we so far turn away from the Infinite One, disregard His will, despise His commandments, and quench His spirit; we also turn away from the life and peace impersonated in Him and communicable to us, if we will have them, and make insane war, not only against the universal good, but against our own highest welfare. If we give God and His righteousness our undivided and unswerving allegiance, the loving loyalty of our very souls, we are in possession of primitive Christian piety. This alone, as the vital source of all virtue, and holiness, and happiness, can renew and transfigure the world and make of it the earthly province of the kingdom of heaven. The renunciation of all idolatries is the only hope of the race. Clinging to them there is no deliverance for it from the seething abyss of its follies and woes. If it be said that this cannot be done, that man is wedded to his idols and will not give them up, will not embrace and illustrate the piety of Christ, my only reply is that he must continue to suffer the consequences of his disloyalty and impiety till he repents and puts away his sin and guilt. But will you and I, my friends, to bring the matter to a personal application — will we remain bound in the prisonhouse of the world's heathenish practices, the slavish devotees of false gods? Will we reject

Christ and that pure piety of his which enabled him to say, "It is my meat and my drink to do the will of him that sent me"? Heaven forbid such revolt against the Highest on our part, and prompt each and every one of us to exclaim in deep contrition and with full purpose of soul,

"The dearest idol I have known,
Whate'er that idol be,
Help me to tear it from thy throne
And worship only thee."

DISCOURSE IV.

CORRUPTIONS OF PRIMITIVE CHRISTIAN PIETY: PART 1.

IN RELATION TO WORSHIP.

"God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands, neither is worshipped with men's hands as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life and breath and all things." *Acts* xvii. 24, 25.

I have endeavored in a preceding chapter to set forth clearly the distinctive peculiarities and excellences of pure, primitive Christian Piety, naming several important particulars, to wit: 1. It is a perfectly rational piety; 2. It is a perfectly sincere, unostentatious, and spiritual piety; 3. It is a perfectly radical, comprehensive, and uncompromising piety; 4. It is a perfectly unselfish piety on God's part; 5. It is a perfectly philanthropic, humane, beneficent, and Christ-like piety. I proceed now to show that this piety has been grossly corrupted in certain cardinal respects. One of these I propose to treat in the present discourse — that respecting worship. This may be conveniently done under four heads, viz.: the nature of worship; the design of worship; the expression of worship; and the sanctuaries of worship.

1. The nature of worship. As I have already attempted to show, Christ and his Apostles carefully taught that the only true worship of God is essentially moral and subjective — the "worship of the Father in spirit and in truth." It consists in nothing of a material nature offered to God; in nothing done for or said to him. In this particular it was essentially different from Jewish, Samaritan, and Gentile practices of early Christian days. It consists in love, adoration, prayer, thanksgiving, and other holy emotions cherished towards the infinite Father Spirit, and, through these, in fellowship with him. In other words, it is a sacred, intercommunication between each soul and its Maker; which derives no worth from time, place, companionship, or external demonstration, and which can be judged as to its value only by its moral effects upon the character and life of the worshiper. Such must be the truest, purest, highest worship. Jesus not only taught such worship but was its most illustrious exemplar. The Apostles and many of the early disciples tried hard to be their Master's faithful followers in this matter. But their fidelity provoked the obloquy and most bitter reproaches of both Jews and Gentiles about them. The former accused them of apostasy from the sacrificial rites of Moses, and the latter of atheism. Dr. Mosheim, the great ecclesiastical historian says; "Another circumstance which irritated the Romans against the Christians was the simplicity of their worship, which resembled in nothing the sacred rites of any other people. They had no sacrifices, temples, images, oracles, or sacerdotal orders; and this

was sufficient to bring upon them the reproaches of an ignorant multitude who imagined that there could be no religion without these. Thus they were looked upon as a sort of atheists; and by the Roman laws those who were chargeable with atheism were declared the pests of human society." So the very excellence of their worship became a ground of the world's persecution. But this was during the first and second centuries. It did not last long. Not because of any change in the character or spirit of the foes of Christianity, but on account of the falling away of the Christians themselves from their original lofty standard in this particular.

The apostasy or corruption of the Primitive Christian piety commenced even in apostolic times. A party of Jewish disciples arose, who were so zealous for the ceremonial law that they could not tolerate the more catholic minded Paul, and insisted that all the converted Gentiles should be required to conform to the Levitical ordinances. This caused the first contention in the infant church and resulted at length in an open schism. The Mosaic sacrificial worship was regarded as sacred by one party, while the other held that the new faith wholly superseded it, rendering it utterly null and void. Yet the latter ere long yielded to the inroads of corruption in another guise. The second century had not closed before the democratic, fraternal order of church government was changed by gradual processes into a nascent episcopacy, with ambitious ecclesiastics in power. Dr. Mosheim says; "There is no institution so pure and excellent which the corruption and folly of man will

not in time alter for the worse and load with additions foreign to its nature and original design. Such in a particular manner was the fate of Christianity. In this century many unnecessary rites and ceremonies were added to the Christian worship, the introduction of which was extremely offensive to wise and good men. These changes, while they destroyed the beautiful simplicity of the Gospel, were naturally pleasing to the gross multitude, who are more delighted with the pomp and splendor of external institutions than with the native charms of rational and solid piety." "There is a high degree of probability in the notion of those who think that the bishops augmented the number of rites in the Christian worship, by way of accommodation to the infirmities and prejudices, both of Jews and heathens, in order to facilitate their conversion to Christianity."

This work of deterioration and corruption progressed rapidly as time went on. In the fourth century it reached such a pitch that the famous St. Augustine, who struggled in vain against it, declared that "the yoke under which the Jews formerly groaned was more tolerable than that imposed upon many Christians" in his day. "Hence" says Dr. Mosheim, "it happened in those times, that the religion of the Greeks and Romans differed very little in its external appearance from that of the Christians. They both had a most pompous and splendid ritual; gorgeous robes, mitres, tiaras, wax tapers, crosiers, processions, lustrations, images, gold and silver vases, and many such circumstances of pageantry, were equally to be seen in the heathen

temples and in the Christian churches." Thus the corruption went on from bad to worse till the worship of Christendom became, with a few unpopular exceptions, almost as materialistic, sensuous, and externally showy as that of Pharisaic Jewry, or semi-civilized pagandom. And the evil has come down to our own day, so sanctified by tradition and custom that few professing Christians even suspect its utter incongruity with the teachings and example of their acknowledged Master.

2. The design of worship — its chief aim and use. Christ evidently meant to teach that the design, aim, and use of true worship are to spiritualize and moralize the worshiper by bringing him into closer communion with the all-perfect Father — thus rendering him god-like, heavenly-minded, and happy. But this was not the chief object of the worship generally prevalent among the Jews and Gentiles before his coming. That object was to propitiate God, secure His favor, and maintain religious institutions in the reverence of the multitude. Of course, the incidental motive was always pleaded, that worship promoted moral restraint and order among the people; and hence, it was deemed a social, political, and governmental necessity, as well as a solemn religious duty. Christ based the true worship on no such grounds. His God was "the Father," who was inherently and unchangeably good to all, even to the unthankful and evil. No worship could make Him more so. He needed nothing to propitiate Him. His favor was as inherent and irreversible toward all His offspring as His inmost nature. He only required His

children to feel after Him, seek Him, love Him, worship and adore Him, that they might be spiritually and morally like Him; that they might share His life, enjoy His presence, be kind and helpful to one another, dwell together in harmony and peace, and so each and all attain the highest possible perfection and blessedness.

But it was not long before corruption began to manifest itself in this particular. The Christian church was so easily leavened with Jewish and heathen notions of worship, that, by the time it was made subject to official and clerical control in the latter part of the second century, its departures from the simplicity that was in Christ had come to be not only apparent but deplorable. Thenceforth, with minor exceptions, the objects, aims, and uses of its worship were the same precisely as those prevailing in the ante-Christian world; viz.: to propitiate God's wrath, secure His favor, and hold the masses by a sort of superstitious necromancy to the reverence and support of external religious institutions. Even to this day has this corruption of the true idea of the purpose of worship, to a greater or less extent, prevailed. O how few people accept, appreciate, and improve worship as a heavenly privilege, ordained by their Father in heaven for the sublime purpose of rendering them His true children in spirit, conduct, moral character, and divine enjoyment! Yet this, I repeat, is its grand aim and use according to the teachings of Primitive Christianity and the example of the Master. Who will hear, consider, and act consistently with that view?

3. The expression of worship — in other words, its manner and form. All the feelings, sentiments, and emotions of human nature have some mode of expression, some way of manifesting themselves in the experience of men, either internally or externally or both. Internal expression is cognizable only by one's own spiritual consciousness, by God and by other spiritual intelligences similarly capacitated and exercised. External expression is cognizable by the outward senses of beings possessing a physical organism. True worship, as Christ defined and practised it, is chiefly and vitally expressed in secret prayer, adoration, meditation, and mental exercises of devotion, indulged in as between the worshiper and the Deity exclusively, irrespective of any observance or participation by others. Subordinately, occasionally, and incidentally, it may be expressed externally, socially, and publicly, in various forms or services of devotion, including vocal prayer, singing, and exhortation, which must be heartfelt, sincere, appropriate; not for worldly admiration, personal ostentation, or as unto man, but unto God. This outward worship must be primarily from within; "in spirit and in truth." I need not enlarge on the original simplicity of Christian worship in this feature of it, nor on the corruptions which have reversed the positive instructions of Christ and set at nought his example; and which have rendered much of what passes for Christian worship a solemn ceremonial and little more; a public exhibition addressed to the eyes, ears, and aesthetic tastes of the attending multitude; a sort of popular, pious

entertainment, calculated to please the senses and imagination of non-participating observers. Even the more common and unconventional exercises of social worship are often sadly contaminated with vitiating elements of formality, affectation, vain repetition, and mere noise, which promote little holy communion with God and serve worldly aims and ends rather than heavenly ones. Whether we criticise Catholics, Greeks, or Protestants on this point, we may see the need of a radical reform — a return to primitive Christian simplicity and purity.

4. The sanctuaries of worship. Finite beings, clothed in material bodies and animating fleshly frames, must by the very necessities of their complex nature be somewhere in space and time, whatever they do or are. If they worship, even in secret, they must occupy some definite locality; if they worship socially, as it is natural, right, fitting, and mutually helpful for them to do, they must have some particular, generally understood, appropriate place and hour of meeting and of devotion. Yet, as I showed from the record, Christ and his Apostles made no part of true worship dependent on place or time, but wholly on the right state of mind and heart. Neither in the temples of Jerusalem, Samaria, or any other holy city, was it necessary to appear in order to render acceptable offerings to Him who fills immensity with His presence, who need not be sought in any given locality, and who hath an altar in every humble and contrite heart. Worship "in spirit and in truth" is everywhere approved and accepted of the Father of all souls. Any other, nowhere.

Holy places, days, and seasons, are neither enjoined nor prohibited by Primitive Christianity. Altars, temples, sabbatic institutions, sacred festivals, and ritual observances were not forbidden or condemned, nor were they held up for human reverence as *per se* holy in the sight of God. They were utilized as privileges, worthy of regard and maintenance, as means and conveniences for the enlightenment, reformation, spiritual quickening, and happiness of mankind. If they subserved these ends, it was well. But otherwise, if they were used as substitutes for personal holiness, offsets for acts of justice and charity, or cloaks to hide any kind of wickedness, they were not simply regarded as of no account but as snares to the souls of men. This is sound doctrine. So thought the primitive Christians, and they practised accordingly. They had no sacred places, sanctuaries or church edifices for purposes of worship, religious edification, and praise, distinctively set apart and dedicated, for more than a century after they began to associate together as companies of believers in and followers of Jesus.

Dr. Mosheim says on good authority; "The places in which the first Christians assembled to celebrate divine worship were, no doubt, the houses of private persons. But in process of time it became necessary that these sacred assemblies should be confined to one fixed place, in which the books, tables, and desks required in divine service, might be constantly kept, and the dangers avoided which in those perilous times attended their transportation from one place to another. And then, probably, the

places of meeting that had formerly belonged to private persons became the property of the whole Christian community." "If any one pleased to give the name of church to a house or the part of a house, which, though appointed as the place of religious worship was neither separated from common use nor considered as holy in the opinion of the people, it will be readily granted that the most ancient Christians had churches." Again, "The first Christians assembled for the purposes of divine worship, in private houses, in caves, and in vaults where the dead were buried. Their meetings were on the first day of the week, and in some places they assembled on the seventh, which was celebrated by the Jews. Many also observed the fourth day of the week, on which Christ was betrayed; and the sixth, which was the day of his crucifixion. The hour of the day appointed for holding these religious assemblies varied according to the different times and circumstances of the church; but it was generally in the evening after sunset or in the morning before the dawn."

It will be seen then from good historic testimony that the primitive Christians had no specially consecrated churches or holy places. They held their religious convocations in such localities as, under their variously restricted circumstances, were for the time being most safe, convenient, and comfortable. No great importance was attached to places, or to times and seasons. The safety, convenience, and comfort of the assembled people, not costly offerings to God, nor worldly display, are clearly indicated as the leading considerations in respect to assembling

for religious purposes. This suggests the ruling principle on which all Christians, even in the highest state of prosperity, ought to act in the erection of edifices for public worship; viz.: simplicity, convenience, and comfort — nothing to flatter God, nothing for vain glory, and nothing to astonish, please, and captivate the multitude.

But the seductive voice of the tempter long ago whispered triumphantly to the carnally inclined ear of professing Christians, saying "We must not be behind the Jews and Gentiles in glorifying God or proselyting the world. Architectural magnificence, splendid furnishing, and gorgeous decorations in our church edifices, will greatly promote both. Our cause is worthy of it and demands it, and we shall be objects of derision and contempt without it. People will be attracted to our gatherings by such charms; they will thus be brought under Christian influence; they will be won to the Gospel; souls will be saved; and God will be honored and glorified."

By such specious pleadings, extravagance, worldliness, and luxury gained an entrance within the confines of the church, and corruption in a new form turned the hearts of men away from the pure spirit of the primitive Gospel. Immediately after the marriage of the church and state under Constantine in the fourth century, this defection became most striking and notorious. Hear Dr. Mosheim once more: "No sooner had Constantine abolished the superstitions of his ancestors, than magnificent churches were everywhere erected for the Christians, which were richly adorned with pictures and images and

bore a striking resemblance to the pagan temples, both in their outward and inward form. At this time it was looked upon as an essential part of religion to have in every country a multitude of churches; and here we must look for the true origin of what is called the *right of patronage*, which was introduced among Christians with no other view than to encourage the opulent to erect a great number of churches by giving them the privilege of appointing the ministers that were to officiate in them."

In this way not only did a love of display and worldly splendor supplant the humble, unostentatious piety that characterized the first disciples but there was introduced into the high places of the church, to preside at its altars and administer its affairs, as ecclesiastics of various degree, a class of persons who, appointed as they often were by unscrupulous and ungodly patrons of religion and religious institutions, and subject to their control, were unfit for their positions, pursuing a policy which was not only in contravention of the true idea of spiritual worship but which was calculated to lower the previously existing standard of morality and allow the generation and growth among the saints of manifold evils unknown before. No wonder that Christianity, subjected to so many corruptions, should in due time become a religion honeycombed with pompous superstitions, worldly display, selfish aggrandizement, and persecuting violence, so that it was not infrequently the case that the more show there was of worshiping God, the less manifestation there was of practical righteousness; a great gulf opening and widening

and deepening between what was called piety and a pure and holy life. No wonder that while the forms of religion were kept up with great punctiliousness and at immense expense, the grossest inhumanities and the most odious iniquities prevailed, even within the pale of the church itself. Many reforms relating to the evils now under notice have been attempted in latter ages, with some degree of success, but the mania for grand and imposing houses of worship and for a splendid display of religious externals still prevails in the predominant and more popular sects. And this form of corruption is pitifully contagious and contaminating even among those claiming to be rational, enlightened, liberal Christians, the society of Friends and a few smaller eccentric religious orders alone excepted. As to the great body of the nominal church it is so far under the dominion of reprehensible doctrines, ideas, and practices, in the particulars mentioned in this discourse, that a thorough reformation and cleansing are indispensable to the full actualization of the primitive Christian ideal. This actualization seems to be yet in the far distant future, but I have the utmost confidence that it will some day be accomplished. In that day, come it sooner or later in the progressive order of human events, will the true worship of God, as it is taught in the Gospel of Christ and as it was illustrated in the life of Christ, be established in all churches bearing His blessed name, superseding all the perversions and vain formalities which now usurp its place and hinder rather than help the coming of the time when "Holiness to the

Lord" shall not only be ascribed to, but shall vitally characterize all places, modes, appliances, and accessories of worship; when "the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains and be exalted among the hills, and all nations shall flow unto it."

O glorious church renewed, which yet shall rise,
To save the world and greet the bending skies!
Redeemed from all corruption, lo, its light
Shall banish superstition's dreary night,
Dissolve the treacherous shadows of the past
And crown the truth triumphant at the last.
Then shall the living God by men be known
Their heavenly Father, as by Jesus shown;
Him all mankind shall worship and adore,
"In spirit and in truth" forevermore.

DISCOURSE V.

CORRUPTIONS OF PRIMITIVE CHRISTIAN PIETY: PART 2.

IN RELATION TO RITES AND CEREMONIES.

"Are ye so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?" — *Gal.* iii. 3.

The pure spiritual piety enjoined by Christ and his early Apostles reduced the rites of religion to a very few in number and to a low estimate in importance. Aside from frequent meetings for moral and spiritual edification and inspiration, the exercises of which consisted in praying, singing, exhortation, and religious instruction, together with what were termed "feasts of charity," in which the disciples testified to the heartfelt fellowship and mutual love existing between them by simple friendly repasts and contributions to the poor and needy — aside from these forms of worship, water-baptism and the eucharist, or Lord's Supper, seem to have been the only external observances which can be considered as definitely established or held in any way sacred and binding in the primitive Christian church. The great majority of ceremonials and sacrifices regarded with scrupulous solemnity by the Jews, were looked upon by the Christians as types and shadows that were fulfilled in their Lord, as greatly exaggerated non-essentials,

or as human inventions of no practical worth whatever. In each and all these cases, the abuses which had crept in under them, subordinating them to purposes of superstition, self-exaltation, hypocrisy, and inhumanity, were reprobated and severely denounced. Baptism by water was an inheritance from the Jews, among whom it was practiced as a symbol of purification or change of moral life, coming through John, the great baptizer and forerunner of Jesus, and gaining acceptance among Christians as an initiatory sign of admission into the brotherhood of the new faith, and as a pledge of personal reformation and of fidelity to the principles and duties which that faith enjoined and required. The eucharist, or Lord's Supper, was also of Jewish origin, having been derived from the ancient feast of the Passover, which was instituted to commemorate the deliverance of the Israelites from Egyptian servitude, modified and recast into a new form by omitting the roasted lamb and other accessories of the old-time rite, thus adjusting it to the simplicity of the order of church life under the Christian dispensation, and making it commemorative of Christ, the paschal Lamb of God, ordained to deliver men and the world from the servitude of sin.

Some religious extremists, and highly spiritualized transcendentalists have considered water-baptism, the Lord's Supper, and, indeed, all audible praying and other outward forms of worship, as at best relics of superstition or of childish and decaying religious conceptions — quite vain and useless if not absurd and pernicious. Christ and his first ministers thought

otherwise. They honored those observances by both precept and example in their true significance and use, but took good care to guard them, so far as was possible under the circumstances, against all misapprehension and abuse. And I cannot doubt, heeding the teachings of history, observation, experience, and sober reflection, that the wisdom of God, in and through those personages, sanctioned and sanctified those observances as means of edification, spiritual uplifting, and renewal of life to those sincerely regarding them and to the world. At any rate, I have never discovered in those who discarded or neglected them, either in former times or in our own day, any evidence of moral and spiritual superiority, — any signs of gain to themselves or to the church or to the cause of truth and holiness on that account, but rather the contrary. I cannot but feel that those persons, as a rule, who have for any reason disregarded them have missed some of the most efficient means of personal religious culture, and that those churches that have abandoned them or suffered them to fall into abeyance, have surrendered important agencies for accomplishing the distinctive work which in the providence of God is given them to do ; for gaining and retaining a hold upon the religious affections and sensibilities of men, especially of the young, and for advancing in the world the cause of holiness and love. This, however, is not the place to argue the utility and value of religious rites and ordinances. The present duty is rather to expose some of the principal corruptions of Primitive Christian Piety in its relation to such rites and ordinances.

I have just said that baptism and the Lord's Supper were the only external observances which seem to have been recognized and approved by Jesus, and could be considered as established ceremonials among the early disciples. But there very soon arose a class of Judaizing Christians, referred to in a former discourse, who were tenacious of all the requirements of the Levitical law, and who sought earnestly and perseveringly to engraft those requirements upon the ritual of the primitive Christian church. These people were undoubtedly sincere and honest in their views and endeavors. They were devotedly attached to the new religion. They believed in Christ with all their heart and in the Father whom he revealed, as they did in the principles and duties which he inculcated. They suffered great persecutions from both unbelieving Jews and Gentiles on account of their steadfast, unfaltering Christian faith. But at the same time they could not understand the lofty spirituality or the unostentatious simplicity of the Gospel. Nor could they see that Christ had freed them from the manifold rites and sacrifices of the old dispensation. They clung to those rites and sacrifices from a mistaken sense of duty, and, as they believed and felt, in reverent fealty to God. It seemed to them that all the Gentile converts must come under the same yoke of allegiance to the Jewish ceremonial in order to be true followers of the Messiah. He was himself one of the Jewish race, and, in their view a product of the Jewish faith — a new prophet of that faith on a higher plane and with a broader vision than those

who had preceded him,— Moses, Samuel, Isaiah, and the rest. But the earlier Apostles and their co-workers and immediate successors took more catholic ground. They taught that Christ was "the end of the law for righteousness" to all his faithful followers; that, in the new order of life, "neither circumcision availeth anything not uncircumcision but a new creature"; that "in every nation he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted with him"; and that there should be rendered "glory, honor, and peace to every one that worketh good, to the Jew first and also to the Gentile."

It is not strange that considerable numbers of people in that early time could not take this broad, comprehensive, essentially moral and spiritual view of the Christian Gospel. They had been sedulously trained to a different conception, under a different regime. They had been led to lay great stress upon outward religious forms and observances. And they could not easily pass over to a new and unprecedented view — to one seemingly opposed to what they had hitherto deemed sacred and indispensable. The old had been instilled into them from infancy, it had beeome a part of their being; the new had not had time to eliminate it and take its place in their inner consciousness, or to assume supremacy on the altar of their lives. If in our own day so few understand the high spirituality of pure Christian righteousness as distinguished from the external formalities and ritualisms of the particular sectarian religion in which they have been educated and upon which they have been fed from their youth up, can any one

wonder that those old Jewish converts were similarly benighted and lost to the most sublime characteristics of Christian faith?

Nor is it singular that the main body of the church ere long fell into the same great error and became involved in the same corruption of the primitive doctrine concerning rites and ordinances. In defending the Old Testament against the attacks of the Gnostic philosphers, its teachers assumed, by way of argument, that the Christian church was in all essential respects the anti-type of the Mosaic. Consistently with that view they were obliged to maintain that its ministry in its official character must be a regular priesthood, legitimately succeeding to all the rights, privileges, and immunities of the Levitical sacerdotal order, with, perhaps, some unimportant modifications. Before the close of the second century this feature of ecclesiasticism began to display itself in a marked degree. The servants of the church, as Paul was content to regard himself and his co-laboring apostles, became its lords and rulers, assuming unwarranted authority over the laity, establishing higher and lower grades of official position and duty among themselves, from provincial or diocesan bishops down to humble deacons and deaconesses, governing the affairs of the church through synods or councils; in fact, setting up a priestly caste whose policy it was to acquire, retain, and multiply their own exclusive prerogatives and powers. This led them very naturally to resolve the primitive Christian rites into sacraments and holy mysteries, whereby the common people might be kept in greater

and more reverential subjection ; as it did to increase the number of observances and solemnities within their distinctive jurisdiction.

From this time forth baptism no longer preserved its original simplicity and moral significance as a sign of admission to the company and fellowship of the disciples of Christ, and as a pledge of spiritual renewal and consecration, but it became a holy ordinance or means of purification from sin — in some directions an act of atonement for sin. The water itself was declared to have some special saving power. By solemnly devoting it to baptismal uses it became impregnated, as was claimed, with the divine presence and with superhuman virtue. It washed away all past sins, procuring a complete remission of them and making the recipient fit for heaven. It was the sealing act of regeneration and of full acceptance with God. Under this new view, it was for a time the custom for believers to defer baptism until just before death, in order to be sure that no fresh sins should be committed, and, for lack of baptismal remission, insure exclusion from paradise. Thus Constantine the Great, though professedly converted to Christianity in mid-life, did not submit to this rite till near his decease, so that he might not afterward sin and thus endanger his ascension to the mansions of eternal life and blessedness. Out of this misconception grew at length what was known as the doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration, held to some extent at the present day.

Among the early Christians baptism was administered, as a general custom, at two holy seasons of

the year; viz.: at the Easter festival held in commemoration of the resurrection of Christ, usually in our month of April; and on the Jewish day of Pentecost, occurring fifty days later and commemorating, under Christian auspices, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit immediately after his ascension into heaven. This anniversary at a later date came to be called Whitsuntide, because the recipients of baptism were arrayed in white robes to denote their purification from all evil. In post-primitive times the ordinance was administered in public with imposing formalities by subordinate presbyters, and afterwards confirmed with further solemnities by the bishops Sponsors, under the name of godfathers, came into vogue in due time, and subsequently a multitude of minor rites were introduced as adjuncts of the principal one. Among these were fasting, oral prayer, the verbal renunciation of Satan and all his works, etc., before the rite was performed; and after it, the imposition of hands, making the sign of the cross, annointing with holy oil, a libation of milk and honey, the mutual kiss of peace, the putting on of white raiment, and the placing on the head crowns and garlands of victory. At one period candles were lighted on the occasion, salt was given the baptized one, their lips and ears were touched by the officiating priest with saliva from his own mouth, and other more objectionable and even disgusting practices prevailed. Much of this profane nonsense was subsequently discarded by ecclesiastical authority, but a considerable portion of the less irrational and repulsive of these accessories have been retained

in the Catholic church and in some Protestant churches even to our own times.

It is altogether probable that the mode of baptism was in the apostolic days that of immersion — the entire submergence of the body beneath the surface of the river, lake, pool, or baptistry in which the ceremony took place. Hence St. Peter compared it to the passing through the deep waters of the flood. And Paul says of it, "We are buried with Christ by baptism at his death; that like as Christ was raised, thus we also should walk in the newness of life." So practised and understood it had great significance. "As the entrance into the Christian society," Dean Stanley says, "it was a complete change from the old superstitions or restrictions of Judaism to the freedom and confidence of the Gospel; from the idolatries and profligacies of the old heathen world to the light and purity of Christianity." With the progress of time, however, as the religion of Jesus was carried into colder latitudes and as the custom of baptizing infant children came into favor, a gradual change into the more convenient form of sprinkling was introduced. This, less directly to be sure, but symbolically, teaches to the intelligent mind the same lesson of putting off "the old man which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts" and of putting on "the new man which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." To certain classes of our modern Christians this change from immersion to sprinkling in the mode of baptism is a serious departure from the original method, and in their judgment sets at nought the New Testament teach

ing concerning the matter and invalidates the observance altogether. Not so, however, to those who regard it simply as a token or symbol of a new purpose in life and as a pledge of loyalty to Christ and the church; who are servants "not of the letter but of the spirit" of the Gospel.

Since the time of the Reformation under Luther and others, Protestants have to some considerable extent eliminated from their ceremonial many of the objectionable accessories of this rite which sprung up in the post-apostolic ages, but a majority of them, as well as the Roman and Greek Christians, still endue it with sacramental virtues; to the extent in some cases of ascribing to it, as I just now indicated, regenerating power, which is foreign at least, if not hostile to its primitive character, intent, and use. It must be divested of all these superstitious accretions and corruptions before it will be conformed to the original type as illustrated in the opening years of our era.

The eucharist or Lord's Supper has fared worse than the rite of baptism during the Christian ages at the hands of ecclesiastic casuists and manipulators. Instituted at the beginning as a simple act of commemoration in honor of the great Teacher, its grand and sublime purpose was that of rendering those who observed it more Christlike in spirit, in conduct, and in character. By calling to mind frequently and impressively the pre-eminent self-sacrifice of Christ as the highest manifestation of divine love, as the ideal of human excellence, and as the animating spirit of his true church, his followers, by the

law of spiritual affinity, would become indissolubly attached to him, and, through that attachment, would be united in holy communion with each other and with the Father — all joined and working together for the realization of the prayer, "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

For some time this ordinance seems to have been understood and observed mainly in accordance with this original design, and so was productive of excellent moral results, — faith, hope, love, illustrated in abounding self-sacrifice. The world never before saw such illustrious exemplifications of practical, wide-spread benevolence, fraternity, and holy martyrdom for righteousness sake, as were to be found among the followers of the meek and lowly Jesus.

But it was impossible for these early disciples, converts from Jewish and heathen superstition, to preserve in its pristine purity this simple, natural, unostentatious rite. The first open departure from its original character and use was to give it a specially sacramental significance, even to the extent of making participation in it the equivalent of an oath of allegiance to Christ, according to the primary meaning of the word sacrament in the Roman language from which it is derived, which is *an oath*. An oath is a solemn declaration made to God with the implied invocation of His vengeance if the promise of the declaration is not fulfilled. Hence to exalt the eucharist into a sacrament, in the sense stated, had a tendency to create in the average mind

the idea of the special divinity of Christ and ultimately of his deity; thus converting the rite in question into an act of worshipful piety rather than regarding it as a privilege, a suggestive lesson, and a moral stimulant to holiness of heart and life in imitation of Christ.

In keeping with this conception was another that soon gained recognition and acceptance, to wit: that it was one of the great mysteries of the Christian Gospel, far transcending those of the heathen religions; being characterized in the fourth century as "a tremendous mystery, a dreadful solemnity, and terrible to angels." This invested it with an awe and a dread which instead of quickening, chilled and deadened the finer sensibilities of the soul, and prepared the way for the promulgation and reception of the doctrine that the eucharistic emblems were a veritable sacrifice to God, and that the table on which they were laid was an altar, holy unto Him. At the moment when, by prayer or otherwise, the act of consecrating the emblems took place, there passed into them, it was said, an inconceivable divine virtue which imparted to them special sacredness and value as offerings to the Most High, and at the same time rendered them miraculously potent to those who partook of them for the preservation of the body against impending disease, debility, and death, and for the deliverance of the soul from sin and all its consequences, both in this world and in that to come. From these and kindred sophistical and misleading hypotheses there was gradually developed the famous Catholic dogma of Transubstantiation, which came

to its consummation and open proclamation as an article of faith in the celebrated Council of Trent held in the sixteenth century. The decrees of this august body declared that the bread and wine of the eucharist were miraculously transmuted into the real body and blood of Christ, and hence that whoever partook of these actually ate the flesh and drank the blood of the Saviour of the world. The dogma of *Con*substantiation, held by the Lutherans and some other Protestants, differed from this only in teaching that the body and blood of Christ were only *substantially* and not *really* present in the eucharistic emblems. Priestly assumption could rise no higher nor human credulity be farther stretched than is manifest in the promulgation and acceptance of either of these views. From these and all other vagaries and pious conjectures of purely human devising, it is needful to go back to the simple thought and feeling of the primitive church touching this ordinance, keeping ever in view its original character and purpose; the maintenance and supreme control in the human heart and in human life of those great moral and spiritual realities for the sake of which alone all religious forms exist, and without which, as the ultimate object and aim, such forms are but a vain and empty show.

I have not time or space to mention numerous secondary rites, ceremonies, and usages, which from time to time sprang up as adjuncts of the Lord's Supper and were employed for the purpose of attracting, impressing, and governing the masses of the common people. Nor to speak of sundry kindred

inventions and devices which have made the nominal Christian religion of the world, in respect to rites and ordinances, little better than a systematic compound of Judaism and Paganism, variously modified and amalgamated so as to produce change of external appearance rather than change of essential substance. In this statement I include all that pertains to the conduct of religious convocations and to the manifold ceremonials of public worship.

I conclude this discourse upon the corruptions of Primitive Christianity in relation to rites and ordinances by summing up what I have said under three heads: 1. Perverting the few original observances from simple, benignant privileges, calculated to make men morally and spiritually Christ-like, into mysterious, awful sacraments, designed to propitiate God and enhance priestly importance. 2. Borrowing, inventing, and adding to the few original observances a vast number of others, purporting to be of divine authority, for the same reprehensible purpose. 3. Metamorphosing the primitive Christian piety from its original spiritual purity and grandeur, which forbids all religious exercises and formalities "to be seen of men," into a complex and meaningless ritualism, replete with solemn pomp, sensuous splendor, and worldly display. These corruptions, in the providence of God and the progress of mankind, will sometime pass away, and the beautiful, sublime, redeeming simplicity of primitive Christian piety will everywhere prevail. Then shall the Church rise to its destined place of transcendent power among

men, and shine forth through all the earth in millennial glory.

> "The pure in heart, her baptized ones.
> Love her communion cup."

DISCOURSE VI.

CORRUPTIONS OF PRIMITIVE CHRISTIAN PIETY: PART 3.

IN RELATION TO ITS DIVORCE FROM MORALITY.

"Go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy and not sacrifice." — *Matt.* ix. 13.

"Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and annis and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, justice, mercy, and faith; these ought ye to have done and not to leave the other undone." — *Matt.* xxiii. 23.

These texts renewedly indicate, what was plainly set forth by me in a former discourse, that the pure, primitive Christian piety was intimately related to pure morality; was, indeed, inseparably conjoined with it, so that love of God, love of man, and love of well-doing must stand or fall together. I there showed, moreover, that such piety was not required because God needed it, nor to propitiate His favor, nor to render Him in any wise more kind, loving, merciful than He otherwise would be; but because man needed it, to bring him into closer communion with his heavenly Father, imbue him with the Holy Spirit, and thereby render him like God in disposition, conduct, and character. This being the case, it necessarily follows that no devout exercises or

formalities which fail to produce these results are of any absolute worth to God or man. True piety therefore, however manifested, is not so much a religious *end* as a *means* to an end,— as God's method of rendering His creatures just, merciful, holy, and happy in themselves and among themselves, as He is happy in Himself and towards all His offspring. Consequently the genuine Gospel teaches us to be pious in order that we may be righteously moral, to love God that we may love our fellow creatures as He does, and that we may love His laws and obey them. To this end we are to worship; — to pray, to sing, to use all the formalities of devotion as well as all religious privileges whatsoever.

But if people's theological conceptions are not such as Christ taught; if, instead of regarding God as the all-perfect Father, they consider Him an Almighty Sovereign, seeking His own glory rather than the welfare of the creatures He has made: if they deem Him a stern, jealous, vindictive despot, what then? Then, of course, to the extent of such false conceptions they will serve Him more from selfish fear than from filial love, and their piety will consist chiefly in sacrifices, offerings, and oblations designed to appease His wrath and win His approving favor, with little regard to the higher moralities of life or to philanthropic service of mankind. I pointed out the deleterious and pernicious influence of false views of God, His character and government, in the first volume of this work. In studying the history of Christianity from the beginning we find that the corruption of primitive Christian piety followed close

upon the footsteps of theological corruption, and kept even pace with it. For, despite all the declamation heard against theology and in praise of a creedless religion, the generality of mankind have always reflected in a marked degree their predominant theological beliefs in their actual piety and morality, either commendably or deplorably. Not because they reason themselves into this course by logical processes, for only a few do this; but because their honest convictions regarding divine realities create a penetrating, life-imparting atmosphere, wherein their souls expand or contract, like the quicksilver of a thermometer in the variable temperature of surrounding air. In the natural order and eternal fitness of things it must forever be so.

Now what I desire to do in this discourse is to exhibit that gross corruption of primitive Christian piety which, besides vitiating it in other respects, has divorced it from and exalted it above pure ethics — Christian morality. This mischievous work began a century at least before its culmination in the union of church and state under the emperor Constantine. After that malign event, the waters of iniquity, for a long time accumulating, became an overwhelming flood, swelling and rolling onward with augmented force and turbidity down to the sixteenth century, when the evil reached its utmost height. It was then brought to bay and partially assuaged, but all Christendom is still sadly blotched with the plague-spots of its contagious defilement. This defection accompanied and aggravated the corruptions which took place with reference to religious worship, rites,

and ordinances already considered. As these became Judaized and heathenized — shrouded in mystery and awe-inspiring sanctity, or clothed in the garb of superstition, devotees became correspondingly regardless of the claims of justice, truth, mercy, purity, and charity,— the common virtues of life, the vital elements of character, the indefeasible requirements of the law of righteousness. As we turn the pages of history, and especially of ecclesiastical history, we are struck and shocked by the dark developments in this particular which are there revealed. A few of the more important features of the case are worthy of notice.

1. We behold in looking over the annals of the Christian church the rise and growing supremacy of an ambitious, worldly-minded, unscrupulous clerical hierarchy at the head of religious affairs, wrangling, intriguing, contending within its own limits, and doing all manner of reprehensible things for the sake of rank, power, and self-aggrandizement, with little or no regard to the simplest precepts and duties of the Gospel of Christ. Many of those involved were, in fact, shamefully dissolute and immoral personally, yet were they officially consecrated and pious, serving in all the high places of the church. They professed the Christian faith, they conducted the ceremonies of worship, they were punctilious in the observance of a multitude of ritualistic formalities, going through them all with most pious air and with solemn regularity and exactitude. They moreover taught the laity to omit no rite, service, or penance, declared to be necessary to keep their dread accounts

square with God, and retain a balance in their favor on the pages of the divine ledger. If they failed in that regard — were remiss in the ceremonials of religion, and so turned the balance to the other side, bringing themselves under condemnation, woe be unto them! Endless damnation or at least the fearful pains of purgatory awaited their souls. If by due exercises of piety or ritualistic performances they could keep their heavenly ledger right, after the fashion systematically taught them, morality, a rightly ordered life, would be of very little account and the lack of these would incur no serious loss.

2. Again we see in reading ecclesiastical history a long succession of abominable cruelties and persecutions perpetrated against Jews, Mohammedans, pagans, heretics, etc., all in the name of Christ though all utterly contrary to his spirit, precepts, and example. The record is dark and hideous with this sort of iniquity — abounding in tales of violence and reeking with human gore. Nevertheless, temples multiplied and ill-gotten wealth garnished them, while solemn assemblies, feasts, fasts, processions, and a long list of pompous demonstrations, were their concomitants. Meantime, poor, down-trodden humanity, groaned beneath the burdens imposed upon it or suffered and died in neglect and despair, save as it sometimes found relief from alms gathered and bestowed with almost as much pretension and display as attended the worship of God, the adoration of saints and angels, or the observance of other formalities of religious devotion and zeal.

3. A more careful scrutiny of this kind of corruption — of the long-prevailing divorce between piety, or the profession and show of piety, and morality, will disclose the reproachful fact that for a long time what have been properly denominated pious frauds were sanctioned, or at least tolerated and allowed, as justifiable means of strengthening the priesthood, of gaining converts, and of promoting the growth and glory of the church. False gospels, false legends, false miracles, false relics of saints, and manifold other forms of deception and trickery prevailed to a wide extent for several centuries. The doctrine which Paul so openly condemned, that we may "do evil that good may come," or in a new version, "the end sanctifies the means," was boldly taught and defended by learned casuists and ecclesiastics of high position and repute. This doctrine, which subverts all pure ethics, or, at least, the immorality it represents, has by no means gone out of fashion, even among religious teachers and people who verbally denounce and disown it. But all pious fraud, falsehood, hypocrisy, deceit, is wicked and abominable, when viewed in the light of New Testament Christianity. And no show of piety, nor pretence of good to be accomplished, can justify or excuse, much less atone for, any such violation of the first principles of truth and honesty, as between man and his fellow man; as between the teachers and ministers of religion, under whatever name, and the people at large.

4. Another form of the particular evil under notice may be seen in the long-time prevailing and

still recognized doctrine of absolution, or remission of sins as it was sometimes termed. According to this doctrine a wrong-doer could receive discharge from his guilt and escape the consequences of his iniquity by making confession to a priest, by submitting to some prescribed form of penance, or by making sufficient contribution to the church treasury. The same immunity could be gained for those who had died impenitent and were suffering the tortures of purgatorial fire, by the purchase of masses in their behalf on the part of friends, and premediated iniquities could be condoned beforehand and committed without incurring guilt or the divine condemnation, by procuring indulgences, as they were termed, or authorized permits at certain stipulated prices, the proceeds of which were devoted to such uses of a religious character as the ecclesiastical dignitaries might decide. It was from this source that money was obtained by which the magnificent St. Peter's Church at Rome, costing fifty millions of dollars, was built. What a vast amount of vice, crime, and horrible wickedness has been ostensibly cancelled and its record erased from God's great book of judgment by these priestly devices and performances, not one of which has any warrant from the primitive testimonies of Christ and his appointed ministers. How many millions of people have had their moral sense perverted and their habitual sinful inclinations confirmed and strengthened, often to the utmost, by the delusive assurance of those whom they recognized and trusted as faithful interpreters and heralds of the Christian Gospel, that confession, penance,

masses, indulgences, or the payment of money for any purpose, could and would absolve them from guilt and merited punishment — could and would annul and set aside the divine law of retributive justice, which teaches that "whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap." The famous St. Bernard, the foremost champion of the second great crusade to recover Palestine from the Mussulmans in the middle ages, in enlisting recruits, said, "God condescends to invite to His service, murderers, robbers, adulterers, perjurers, and those sunk in other crimes; and whosoever falls in this cause shall secure pardon for the sins which he has never confessed with a contrite heart." Thus did this notable and pious prelate, canonized as saint of the first rank, make an act of assumed service of God, itself reeking with blood, an atonement for the grossest of iniquities, thereby not only trampling under foot the plain precepts of the Gospel of Christ but juggling with the eternal principles of moral order in the universe of souls. Much after the same fashion do professed ministers of Christ and doctors of theology now-a-days promise military characters of every grade and type, however gross their personal immoralities, immunity from the consequences of those immoralities and a ready entrance into the celestial abodes, on the sole ground that they have been patriotic and brave soldiers in some righteous war (and all wars are righteous in the eyes of those who inaugurate and wage them) — because they have been skillful and expert in the art of human slaughter —

in increasing orphanage and widowhood in the world and multiplying the miseries of mankind!

5. As another illustration of the still existing practice of divorcing piety from morality and making certain religious exercises or acts take the place of righteousness in human life, I have but to call attention to the fact that rich sinners in these times are often led by their spiritual teachers and guides to think that, by liberally endowing their church, founding religious institutions, giving freely to the cause of missions, or leaving large sums of money to be expended for masses to be said in order to deliver their souls from purgatory, they cancel the guilt of a life of persistent wickedness and find acceptance with the great Judge of all the earth. The utter folly, nay, the impiety of all these notions is most palpable to an enlightened and spiritualized mind. That God can be moved to mercy and grace by any sort of sacerdotal mediations, sacrifices, or acts performed in the name of religion; that the legitimate consequences of iniquity can be set aside or escaped by any sort of pietistic legerdemain, thus relieving one of the indispensable necessity of keeping the divine commandments, — of "doing justly, loving mercy, and walking humbly with God," is one of the most glaring, mischievous, demoralizing forms of that corruption of the primitive Christian piety which has characterized the nominal church of Christ from the early centuries of our era unto the present day.

6. Finally, passing over many minor specifications which might be made in illustration of the fact

that there has been a great and deplorable lapse from the original type of piety among Christian believers in its relation to morality, I would call attention briefly to the long-continued complicity of the Church with the civil governments of the world and their unchristian machinery — to those institutions, laws, methods, customs, and practices which are in opposition to the principles and spirit of the Gospel. Pure Primitive Christianity recognized worldly governments as natural and necessary for mankind on the low moral plane of life occupied by people at large, and as ordained of God in His general providence to maintain a certain degree of civil and social order and prevent worse conditions; to be respected for whatever of good they might accomplish, and to be obeyed in respect to their demands and requirements to the extent of submission to their authority, even when unjust and tyrannical, without physical resistance except in the passive form of martyrdom for righteousness' sake. But at the same time Christians were conscientiously precluded from voluntarily entering into worldly governments, in their then existing form and character, either as officers of administration or responsible co-governing constituents and participants. And for these reasons: 1. Because they had professedly risen to a higher moral plane, entered a kingdom not of this world, and pledged an unreserved allegiance to Christ, the head of that kingdom. 2. Because the kingdom of Christ required that its subjects should never kill, hate, injure, or harm any human being, even the worst of offenders and enemies;

never do evil that good might come; never sanction idolatry, tyranny, persecution, war, inhumanity of any sort, or any deliberate transgression of the two great commandments requiring love to God and all mankind; in fine, never be "of this world" in any respect contrary to the precepts, spirit, and example of their Lord and Master. 3. Because the governments of the world were fashioned and administered without regard to these vital and imperative considerations, mainly on the basis of selfish policy and political expediency suited to the moral status of the people over whom they exercised authority; — because they enacted many unrighteous laws, established and perpetuated many vicious customs and practices, and were maintained and operated in the last resort by an appeal to injurious and deadly force, either penal or warlike. 4. Because these governments exacted unconditional allegiance to their supremacy in respect to what was evil and unchristian in them as well as to what was good and right, making no provision for a higher allegiance to Christ, and so rendering it impossible for conscientious followers of Christ to render them the unreserved fealty and support they demanded. Such being the case, they must either be disloyal to their Lord or stand outside of all civil governments, so far as involved voluntary acknowledgment of their moral supremacy, responsibility for their unjust administration, and above all complicity with what was in them contrary to the spirit and principles of their holy religion. There was therefore no alternative for them in good conscience but to stand outside. This they

could do while cherishing a profound respect for the providential ordination and use of these governments, without being dechristianized by them. For about two centuries this was the sublime, impregnable attitude almost unanimously maintained by the Christian church. Then there came a marked degeneracy in this regard, which culminated in the calamitous union of church and state under Constantine in the fourth century, already mentioned.

From that time forth down through the ages only a scattered few professing Christians adhered to the primitive standard of non-interference with matters of civil government and most of these did so but imperfectly. The overwhelming majority of clergy and laity entered actively into the manipulation and conduct of political affairs, gaining control of the scepter, the purse, and the sword, wherever they could, and employing them as they pleased with little or no deference to the high morality or prescriptive duties of the New Testament. Yet they claimed all the while to act in the name of Christ and for the promotion of his cause and kingdom, but practically to the betrayal of both. They kept up a most costly and magnificent show of religious devotion and zeal, but turned their backs upon many of the cardinal features of pure and undefiled religion as taught and exemplified by the Master, instituting and using without scruple the carnal instrumentalities of authority and power which he distinctively forbade. Piety was thus divorced from morality, as in other ways, and Christendom in its governmental and national aspects became the wide theater not

only of wrangling, contention, chicanery, and all sorts of demagogueism, but of persecution, slavery, cruelty, violence, and wholesale slaughter. Infinite pains have been taken among all so-called Christian nations to propitiate God and make sure of heaven in a future state by an unnumbered list of pietistic contrivances, and contending sects have vied with each other in maintaining a magnificent array and display of religious establishments and exercises, but the great duties growing out of the law of love to God and man — the duties of philanthropy, charity, and solid morality have been during the advancing centuries most egregriously neglected in governmental concerns, and often utterly forgotten and trampled in the dust.

The light of returning morn has been increasing for the past few hundred years and especially for several of the later decades and is revealing many still existing hideous perversions of Primitive Christianity unsuspected as yet by any considerable portion of the church. It is astonishing to think that with all the boasted progress of science and civilization, with all the boasted progress in religious conceptions and ideals, the nations of Christendom constitute today the most belligerant and warlike portions of the earth. They enlist more soldiers, maintain mightier armies, build more and stronger navies, fortifications, and arsenals, invent more effective machineries for human slaughter, devastate more territory, destroy more property, sacifice more lives, and cause more misery and woe by military operations than the other entire two-thirds of the human

race — all heathen tribes and people combined. And all or nearly all within their own borders — in armed conflicts and deadly encounters among themselves: Christian meeting Christian in mortal combat, each eager to shed the blood of the other and baptize the earth with Christian gore.

And yet, even now, not one professed Christian in a hundred, perhaps not one in a thousand, raises a voice of protest against this "worst vestige of barbarism," as Channing called it, or seems to think for a moment that it is in any way unchristian. The vast majority of church members pray, exhort, sing Te Deums, etc., against each other's government and in behalf of their own; they offer the oblations of thanksgiving to God and shout hosannas to His name over battles fought and victories won, as if the most selfish, jealous, cruel, blood-stained patriotism, as it is termed, were the greatest of all virtues, the sublimest of Christian duties. At the same time the long dark train of vices and evils which necessarily accompany and follow war are either winked at or sentimentally lamented, while the soldier, especially if he be skilful and successful in slaughtering his fellow-men, is canonized by all departments of the church as a veritable saint, fit for a heavenly mansion, though his private character be reeking with iniquity and moral defilement. Going back to the days of Constantine and marking the fall of the Roman Empire which went down in blood, we may grope our way through the dark ages to the time of the Reformation and thence to the present moment, noting what hecatombs of human beings have

been offered as sacrifices to Moloch, "the fiercest of fallen spirits," on the field of battle, and what oceans of human blood have been shed by man's fratricidal hand, and then pause to soberly ask, What has the great Christian Church been doing all this time? It has in large part been acting as priestly confessor to the state, to sanctify its iniquities and grant absolution to its sins; especially to justify and consecrate the horrid barbarities of the gigantic war system of the world. With few honorable exceptions, it has been aiding, abetting, stimulating, and often directing on one side or the other, or on both sides, this long-drawn-out retinue of human butchery. Did Christ and his Apostles set the example for such conduct? Did they teach such a blood-shedding religion? Did they ever suggest or countenance such a divorce between piety and morality; such corruption of true piety, such perversion of pure morality? Never, in the least degree, to the smallest extent. And whoever would be a faithful follower of the great Teacher, his disciple in spirit and in truth, must disown, renounce, and abjure all such acts of disloyalty to him at once and forever.

DISCOURSE VII.

PRIMITIVE CHRISTIAN MORALITY.

"Do men gather grapes of thorns or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit: but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. Wherefore by their fruits shall ye know them." — *Matt.* vii. 16, 17, 20.

Of Piety, the first general branch of Personal Righteousness to the consideration of which this volume is devoted, I have treated amply in the six preceding discourses. I now proceed to take up the second branch of the same subject, — Morality. Piety I have defined as that department of Personal Righteousness in man which concerns him chiefly and more especially in his relation to God. Morality is that department which concerns him chiefly and more especially in his relation to man; that is, subjectively to himself, and objectively to fellow human beings; perhaps to beings higher and lower than himself in the vast realm of universal life. The connection between piety and morality is really so intimate that it is sometimes difficult to distinguish the two from each other. The same is true of the minor divisions of both. Yet I hope to make such distinctions as the common understanding can readily apprehend, acknowledge, and make available for practical use. Before proceeding to speak of the

cardinal elements or qualities which constitute what I term pure, primitive Christian morality, I beg leave to offer a few preliminary observations.

1. Whatever may be the vital importance and necessity of true piety those of true morality are, if possible, still greater: certainly in this present human world. Mainly because the chief use of piety is to superintend, promote, and preserve morality, which more directly and positively affects human welfare and happiness on the earth. In this view, piety, though in itself a high attainment and source of joy, is not so much an end of being as a means to an ulterior end — the generation of virtuous endeavor and development of a lofty type of character. If in any instance it fails to produce this result, it is comparatively worthless; since God does not in any sense need it, and man in such a case would not be essentially benefited by it. This is not the popular religious estimate of piety and morality respectively, inasmuch as this estimate makes much of piety and little of morality. It is based on the assumption that God has an exclusive glory apart from the good of His creatures; that such glory can and must be augmented or promoted by certain rites and ceremonies of worship in order to secure divine favor; and that unless these are observed and rendered in due form and season, men will incur the inexorable wrath of God and be doomed to endless punishment, or, in milder terms, to hopeless destruction. But this assumption I have discarded, as utterly without foundation and radically repugnant to the teachings of Christ, and have declared that God is from and to

all eternity the unchangeable friend of all His moral offspring, whether they be good or bad, whether they love, honor, and serve Him in all good conscience, or vainly and wickedly ignore or deny His existence and forsake the way of His commandments; and that His laws and judgments, His favors and mercies, all spring from His eternal and inalienable goodness. Consequently the piety and morality He requires of His responsible creatures must have their intrinsic worth solely in their fitness to promote and insure the nurture and growth in such creatures of all the higher and diviner attributes of their natures and therewith their highest well-being in all the relations which they sustain to Him, to one another, and to the universe. He requires true piety for the sake of inducing and securing true morality, and true morality for the sake of the order, harmony, mutual helpfulness, and the enduring happiness of His creation, a consummation which would otherwise be impossible.

2. The morality of Christianity is the final test of its absolute divine excellence over that of all other religions and philosophies. Miracles, however well authenticated, genuine, and wonderful, are not the final and all-sufficient test of truth or of any system of faith. Historic records are not. Ecclesiastical dicta or institutions are not. Nothing but the consent and approval of an enlightened judgment and all the nobler qualities of the soul reinforced by beneficent and happy results in character and life, can be accepted as satisfactory proofs and grounds of belief in matters of this sort. The ultimate

proof is, "The tree is known by its fruit." In this way and only in this way must it be fairly demonstrated that Jesus of Nazareth taught and exemplified a higher, truer morality than is embodied in any other ethical system known to our world. This morality, the primitive Christian morality, must be shown to embrace all the essential virtues to be found in any and every other system, whether of faith or philosophy, and also to exclude all their radical defects and vices whether of precept, of fundamental principle, or of required duties in practical life. Nor is this enough. It must be shown to enjoin virtues and insist on principles of action and courses of conduct more unselfish, disinterested, and benevolent; more pure, holy, and God-like than are elsewhere declared and urged upon human attention, belief, and practice. And furthermore, it must be shown that this Primitive Christianity, when clearly understood and given the mastery of the hearts and lives of men, does actually produce a higher type of character, a nobler order of manhood and womanhood, a diviner humanity, than proceeds from any and all other forms of faith or philosophy that have ever been submitted for consideration and acceptance to the intelligent, moral judgment of mankind. This is the fruit which tests and determines the quality and value of this tree.

And if all this cannot be fairly shown and demonstrated, what then? What but that Christianity is only one among many rival religions or philosophical systems, on about the same moral level, perhaps a little higher in some respects, perhaps a little lower

in others, competing with the rest for acknowledgment and supremacy, but yet like them an imperfect system, which can be, ought to be, and must be transcended and cast forever away by the progress of the race in some coming generation of the world's history. As for me, I can admit nothing of the sort. I shall contend that the pure Christian morality has in it all the good without any of the evil contained in the other ethical systems of the world, and also that it transcends them all in its highest required virtues and duties. Therefore, as thus tested, the genuine Christianity of Christ is to my mind the one divinely excellent and absolute religion. Nevertheless, if any other can be fairly shown to present to the enlightened judgment of mankind a positively and demonstrably higher morality than Christ taught and exemplified, then I will yield my reverence for the religion of the Gospel and transfer it to the more deserving and defensible claimant. But

3. In trying this case I shall insist on truth, justice, and impartiality — on perfect candor and fairness. And first I shall demand that the original, pure Christianity of Christ shall be tried, and not some degenerate form of religion which has sprung up in later times and been masquerading before the world under Christ's sacred name. Next, I shall demand that the Scriptures of the New Testament shall be the authority chiefly relied upon to settle questions of fact and doctrine in the case and not traditions nor metaphysical inferences — still less modern theological and ethical deductions or opinions. And I must especially insist that the obvious, unso-

phisticated, and sublime teachings of Christ, as learned from the record, fairly interpreted and understood, shall be accepted as final and unquestionable — not be nullified, perverted, or transformed by human ignorance, superstition, prejudice, casuistry, or assumption. These to me are indispensable prerequisites to a trustworthy proceedure in such an examination as I have undertaken.

Suppose a class of opponents to the claim I am making should come forward and contend that they cared nothing for the type of Christianity set forth in the New Testament Scriptures, thus ignoring the most authentic record that exists of the utterances of Christ and his Apostles and of their example, but should assume *that* and *that only* to be Christianity which the church during the last fifteen centuries has claimed and taught to be such, would that be just, truthful, and fair? Not in my judgment. Nor would I trifle with the subject on such an issue. Suppose again that another class should say: "The New Testament is well enough in its place, but there are important traditions that have come down from Jesus and the chosen promulgators of his Gospel and been carefully preserved by their anointed successors in the church which he founded and of which St. Peter was the chief corner-stone, and these traditions are of equal importance and credibility with the testimonies of the written record; they greatly modify that record and constitute no inconsiderable portion of the evidence to be examined and weighed in an investigation relating to the primary foundations of Christian faith and practice — relating to facts and

doctrines connected with the founding of our religion." What proof could they give me that their traditions are reliable and worthy of consideration? Nothing better than their own assertions and those of their predecessors of past generations, most of them lost utterly in the glimmering uncertainty of the centuries that have come and gone since the age of the Apostles. I can neither in reason nor in good conscience yield to any such assumptions. And then, in addition to the two supposed classes of casuists referred to, there really appears a motley troop of theologians, metaphysicians, jurists, statesmen, politicians, warriors, merchants, bankers, and others living on the common plane of worldly, self-seeking expediency and attainment, all claiming to be Christians and all professing to be governed by what they understand to be New Testament morality; but they must be allowed to interpret and apply the principles and precepts of the Gospel after their own fashion — in such a way as to justify themselves in their own chosen positions and pursuits; after the law of a carnal commandment and not after the power of an endless life; that is, not after the eternal commandment of God. By which they really mean that the principles, maxims, habits, customs, fashions, and usages of society, as at present constituted and operating, shall be allowed the sanction of Christ's teaching, even though in important and vital respects they may be practically in open hostility to it. They hold nominally to Christianity and its holy principles and precepts, but it is as they understand them. They understand them in a sense

not conformed to the conclusions of sound exegesis and just criticism but in a sense accommodated to their own personal convenience, taste, inclination, or ambition, and thus make them of little or no reformatory, uplifting, saving effect; thus rob them of their distinctive excellence and divinely redeeming power. I consent to no strategy of this sort. Let us first of all things beside honestly consider and fairly ascertain what Christ himself meant to require in his testimonies concerning truth and duty, however they agree with or differ from the dominant theories and practices of this world. Then let us be fully persuaded in our own minds whether the righteousness he teaches, illustrates, and enjoins upon those who enroll themselves as his disciples and bear his name is absolutely divine and perfect, worthy of hearty acceptation, or merely human, imperfect, and of doubtful truth and utility. If the former let us reverently acknowledge it, bow to it, receive it into good and honest hearts, and endeavor to exemplify it in thought and conduct; — strive to approximate it in character and in life. If the latter, Christ must, of course, in our judgment, take rank with other eminent religionists that from time to time have appeared in the world and his morality with the ethical theories which they have devised and offered to the intelligent consideration and moral judgment of mankind. Then, as some of our pretentious progressive prophets openly tell us, we must each and all be our own Christs and pick our moral pathway as best we can through the wilderness of human speculation, hypothesis, and experiment. For one I

choose to follow, not unthinkingly and blindly but intelligently and conscientiously, *The Christ*, as I find him revealed and manifested in the man of Nazareth.

4. Another thing I shall insist on in this investigation. It is that in setting forth and magnifying what I hold to be the morality of the Gospel, I do not in any wise or to the smallest extent ignore or invalidate what the sometimes abused term *Christian regeneration* stands for in religious literature, or any of the great experimental spiritual verities of the Christian life. "O, you take it for granted," some zealot of a narrow pietism might be inclined to say by way of objecting to my views, "that what you call pure morality, good conduct, righteousness, constitutes the primal excellence of religion, and that every human being can at once proceed to practice all the virtues which the New Testament commends and enjoins after the manner of outward conformity to a prescribed set of rules, without any such internal, subjective exercise or experience as is represented by the terms faith, repentance, reconciliation to God — without what is called, in religious phraseology, regeneration, growth in grace and in the knowledge of God." I do, indeed, maintain that pure morality is the crowning excellence of the true Christian religion, and that no religion has any intrinsic value or imperative claim upon the souls of men which does not require absolutely and unequivocally that those receiving it and professing to represent it before God and man shall be eminently moral; that is, shall bring forth good fruit in

their common everyday life. But at the same time I deny the charge, open or implied, of ignoring or disparaging spiritual regeneration, much more of trifling with or scoffing at it. I would rather carefully affirm not only its importance but its necessity. I am not so foolish, nor am I so much a stranger to the inward processes by which a soul enslaved to selfish and sinful inclinations, passions, habits, and practices, breaks away from its thraldom and rises into an enjoyment of the liberty wherewith Christ maketh free, as to suppose that evil-doers can put away their iniquity and guilt and bring forth the blessed fruits of Christian righteousness, whether of piety or morality, without faith in the being and infinite goodness of God, sincere sorrow for all wrong done or contemplated, and a sense of reconciliation with Him against whom they have offended and by whose helping strength and grace they are to come off conquerors over all their spiritual foes. If they have no confidence in the heavenly Father's existence, perfections, and gracious helpfulness; no conviction of wrong thought and conduct, and no profound regret for the same; no heartfelt desire to lead a better life; no cheering assurance that God accepts them as His wayward but penitent children, ready to strive henceforth with His vouchsafed aid to bring forth fruits unto holiness, then I have no reason to expect anything but that they will continue in sin — continue to be carnally-minded, foolish, wicked, and miserable in various degrees; and thus continuing, be rendered incapable, not by divine decree nor by native moral inability, but by their

own indisposition, spiritual insensibility, lack of appreciation and aspiration, of entering into the experiences of the higher and better life, — incapable of practicing in any effectual way the pure morality of the primitive Christian faith. Nevertheless, I preach that morality to them, and declare my testimony faithfully and hopefully, whether they will hear or forbear, because I am persuaded that in their inmost souls the Holy Spirit of God, which is ever going forth seeking to save the lost, will sooner or later make them feel somewhat its excellence, beauty, and power, in spite of their sinfulness; and also because I believe and feel that the truth I am commissioned to present to them will become in due time within them the seed of reformation, — the power of a renewed and ever-ascending life.

But here comes the significant question; Of what real worth or use is any faith, penitence, reconciliation or regenerative influence or discipline, which does not ripen into fruits of holy obedience to the divine law; into active, steadfast, personal righteousness; into pure Christ-like morality? None whatever. For this is the grand purpose and end unto which all faith, repentance, and regenerative processes must come, as the proof and assurance of their worth and validity. And I consequently treat the whole subject under notice accordingly; rejecting all notions which assume or imply that there is or can be, under the divine economy as represented by Christ, any salvation without personal righteousness; any redeeming exercise, quality, or attitude of the mind and heart which does not deliver men from

both the love and commission of sin and establish them in the opposite — the love and practice of holiness. By its fruits must the tree be known. Pure morality, a lofty type of character, a practical Christian life, is the only conclusive demonstration of true faith, genuine repentance, real regeneration.

5. One other observation before I close. Some people object to holding up so high a standard of duty and righteousness and insisting upon it so uncompromisingly on the ground that by doing so it is implied that it is immediately practicable by human beings in their present state of development, and that just allowance is not made for the weakness and imperfection of those who may not attain to perfect obedience or conformity to it. God forbid. I know too well the limitations that hedge men in and that prevent them from realizing even their own best ideals, both by sad experience and general observation. But I also know that helping agencies are at hand to supplement mortal imfirmity and aid the aspiring, struggling soul in its endeavors to gain a higher and better life for itself and for the world. I know that while it is in a certain important sense true that we are to "work out our own salvation with fear and trembling," it is at the same time God who "worketh in us both to will and do of his own good pleasure." He guarantees His own divine strength to enable all devout and earnest souls to perform the duties He requires at their hands; as it is written, "My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in thy weakness."—2 *Cor.* xii. 9. Our heavenly Father who lays upon us the sacred burden

of personal responsibility with all it involves of consecration to His service and of fidelity to the great trusts of life, is not a hard and cruel task-master, holding us rigidly to the performance of duties too onerous for our mortal ability to perform, but the most just, considerate, and gracious of all beings. He knows, indeed, that no one of us can rise to the fulfillment of His benign and glorious purpose concerning us and be happy without obedience to His holy law of righteousness. He therefore demands perfect obedience as the condition and pledge of the highest possible attainment and of perfect bliss. But he also "knoweth our frame, he remembereth we are dust." He knoweth our frailty and our need of His wisely and beneficently vouchsafed help. It is for this reason that He exhorts and counsels us to draw near to Him that He may draw near to us, in the assurance that we may find in Him "the grace to help in time of need." Let us do the best we can for ourselves in the line of His commandments, and trust Him for the rest.

And as to making allowance for imperfection and short-comings, let us remember that inasmuch as God does this for us we are thereby placed under solemn obligations to do it for one another. Not, however, by ever lowering the moral standard set up by Christ — not by calling evil good and wrong right — not by falsification or flattery — but only by steadfast adherence to what is eternally true and just and immutably righteous, tempered by that merciful charity which without harsh accusation or vindictive judgment, says, "Go and sin no more";

"Try again"; "Come up higher." Thus will the pure morality of the Christian Gospel be uncompromisingly maintained and glorified in divine union with the most thoughtful, tender, forgiving charity; thus will "mercy and truth meet together and righteousness and peace will kiss each other"; and in so far as man is thereby truly blest, God will be correspondingly glorified.

DISCOURSE VIII.

ON THE FUNDAMENTAL VIRTUE OF HUMILITY.

"At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? And Jesus called a little child unto him and set him in the midst of them; and said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven." — *Matt.* xviii. 1–4.

My last discourse was preparatory to the consideration in detail of the pure morality of Primitive Christianity. There are several fundamental virtues and certain special ones of signal importance inculcated and emphasized by the great Teacher of our holy religion, each of which requires careful and adequate exposition, before proceeding to speak of the errors and abuses which, after a brief period, come in to degrade and vitiate this department of Christian duty and righteousness. It seems to be in logical order to begin with Humility,

> "that low sweet root,
> From which all heavenly virtues shoot";

which lies at the very basis of all excellence and is the primary condition of all growth in the things of

the divine life. It is an essential element of piety no less than of morality; but we are now to treat of it in its relation to the latter, and as an indispensable constituent of the ethics of the Gospel of Christ. No one can read the sayings of Jesus or study the record of his ministry upon the earth, without seeing that humility is the chief corner-stone of that personal righteousness which pre-eminently distinguishes the religion which he lived, suffered, and died to establish in the minds and hearts of men. And his Apostles bear testimony accordingly, of which an ample array of texts could be adduced were it deemed necessary. But what is humility?

1. It is the moral opposite of pride, and can be the more easily and clearly apprehended when put in contrast with that unhallowed sentiment, impulse, or passion. Pride is *inordinate* self-esteem. Humility is *just* self-esteem. Whoever estimates himself in any respect above what he really is, beyond his actual merit, all things considered, is proud. He who estimates himself truthfully, according to his exact abilities, attainments, and deserts, all things considered, is humble. There is a righteous self-esteem, self-appreciation, self-respect, which has no pride in it; which is really virtuous and which is absolutely necessary to all true nobility of character. There is a tameness, slavishness, cowardliness, baseness, meanness of soul, sometimes mistaken for humility, which has no true humility in it; which is really vicious; and which pre-disposes to all that is morally abhorrent in character. We should be very careful not to confound just self-esteem with

pride, nor baseness of spirit with humility. The pure primitive Christian morality excludes and forbids all such confusion. It requires every person to estimate him or herself at actual worth; neither above nor below when judged by the Christian standard. The great danger in this matter is over-estimation and the common vice is pride. Hence the manifold warnings and injunctions of Scripture and high moralists against these.

2. How can we clearly understand and determine our real worth? It is very difficult to do so perfectly. But we can do it proximately by sober thought and reflection. "Know thyself" is the dictate alike of both the highest philosophy and the highest religion. For in knowing ourselves we not only find out what we really are and what we are not, but we learn also our relationship to other beings; how far we are dependent on them, what we owe them, and how we ought to treat them. We soon come to know that we are not infinite but very finite; not self-existent but created; not sure of life, but subject to death; not from all eternity, but of yesterday; not infallibly wise, but ignorant and foolish in many respects; not immaculate and holy, but sinful; not all-powerful, but, at best, weak and feeble; not gods, but men — frail and imperfect human beings. We find our fellow-creatures the wide world over much like ourselves, akin to us by nature, partakers with us in good and evil, more or less; in fine, members of the same common family; that they must be the products of the same creative power — the offspring of the same divine Parent; that they are

dependent on us and we on them for much of happiness; that they can harm us and we them in a thousand ways; that it is best for us and for them to be friends and to treat each other in a friendly way. Continuing our inquiries we at length learn that the lower orders of creation — the animal world and inanimate things, must be used wisely as not abusing them. Thus we gain a knowledge not only of ourselves but of our Maker and our fellow-beings; of our duty and of true religion. And the more we learn of all these things, the more nearly do we estimate ourselves at our real worth; the more do we renounce pride and become clothed in the raiment of true humility. Perfection in this as in every other virtue, or pre-eminence even, is of slow growth and a long sought attainment. But we may and must have a modicum at least of this quality to begin our upward career with, or we cannot take the first steps therein, much less enter heaven. And why not? Because,

3. We shall be too conceited to receive instruction in the truths of the divine kingdom, too self-righteous to feel the need of repentance and reformation, too haughty to confess our follies and sins, even if convinced of them, and too proud and self-sufficient to obey rightful authority, even the authority of God. This is why we cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven, as Jesus said, without becoming as little children; without having the confiding, docile, teachable, childlike spirit. Wanting that spirit we will not be instructed, will not seek to mend our ways and better our lives, will not acknowl-

edge our transgression and our guilt, will not be governed by Him whose right it is to rule over us, though it be for our highest and most enduring good. We are too well satisfied with ourselves, too vain-glorious, to become wiser and better. Recognizing no obligations to grow in grace and in the knowledge of God and feeling no need of such growth, we remain ignorant, foolish, perverse, morally deficient, restless, miserable. How many are in this unfortunate, deplorable state!

4. Pride, or the lack of humility, is equally mischievous and hateful in aggravating our social misconduct and multiplying the evils incident to the relations we sustain to our fellow-men. It renders us insolent, sycophantic, contemptuous, hypocritical, or hateful towards our superiors; jealous and warlike towards our competitors; domineering and abusive towards our dependents; impertinent, unkind, or neglectful towards strangers; bigoted, denunciatory, and persecuting towards those who may differ from us, however honest and upright they may be; eager to punish all classes of offenders; revengeful towards any who wrong or injure us; implacable and unforgiving towards enemies; and often uncomfortable and annoying, if not offensive and vexatious, to our best friends. Nothing of all this accords with pure Christian morality, with social harmony and happiness, or with human progress towards perfection. It is all wrong and worthy only of execration, and must be superseded by humility, or we have discord and confusion rather than order, unity, peace, brotherhood; hell, and not heaven.

5. Pride poisons and paralyzes every virtue with which it is allowed to co-exist in any one, and to the extent of its indulgence and effrontery. No matter how moral or exemplary people may be in other respects, if this odious vice reigns in them, it dulls their most shining qualities of soul, neutralizes their best influence, detracts from their noblest performances and even sours their charities. It is a dragon with poisoned fangs though caged in the bosom of a saint. It is a deadly bane to all heavenly feelings, motives, words, and deeds. Its only neutralizing agency and sure antidote is humility. This gives the proper balance to the soul and imparts health, vigor, and beauty to all other excellences of character. It can pluck from iniquity itself the sharpest sting and render tolerable sinners who otherwise could hardly be endured.

Let us fix our attention then with heartfelt approval, yea, with admiration and profound reverence, on this fundamental virtue of humility as it shines forth from its paramount place in Primitive Christianity, and especially as it found illustration in Christ himself through both precept and example. How true, pure, and perfect was his character in this respect! Did he not speak wisely and justly when he said "I am meek and lowly in heart?" And yet did he ever depreciate or dishonor his own moral dignity, worth, responsibility, or authority? Did he ever underestimate himself? ever cower, cringe, or debase himself before the face of men? or in any way sink himself below his own proper level as the great spiritual Teacher and Leader of

mankind to their divinely ordained and glorious destiny? ever show himself to be tame, spiritless, servile? Never. And now, on the other hand, did he ever over-estimate himself, assume false importance before God or man, or exempt himself from the most menial offices of usefulness and beneficence? Did he ever deride or despise the poorest speciman of humanity, the most guilty sinner, or the vilest wretch? Never. The only instances in which he seemed especially stern and severe — in which he has been charged by his critics with harshness and cruelty, are those wherein he rebuked and denounced pride and self-righteousness. In his day there were Scribes and Pharisees, rulers and lordly officials in both church and state, notoriously haughty, bigoted, tyrannical, covetous, persecuting, hypocritical. Was it unbecoming the prince of humility and meekness to arraign such at the bar of righteous judgment and visit them with stern and uncompromising reproof and condemnation? Was it out of place and out of divine order for the great Teacher of absolute truth and righteousness to upbraid them and forewarn them of the bitter woes they were treasuring up for themselves under the government of a just God against the inevitable day of retribution? Could he have loved humility and been true to its imperative demands and not have hated pride in these its worst forms, and declared in terms not to be misapprehended what must be the consequences of persistently and flagrantly cherishing and indulging it? Could he have preached humility to any good purpose without reprobating

its opposite, conceit and haughtiness? Could he have been the true Christ and approved those guilty of arrogance and hypocritical pretence? or flattered them? or excused and condoned their vices without testifying boldly and unequivocally against them as utterly repugnant to the fundamental principles of morality and to human happiness? Surely not. Yet he was not the enemy even of such sinners but their true friend. For after having faithfully reproved them, he sat down and wept for them as he did over the city upon which their iniquity was bringing a swift and terrible destruction. (Read *Matt.* xxiii. 36–39.)

If we still further scrutinize the humility of Christ, we shall find it to have been a pre-eminent characteristic of him from the beginning to the end of his earthly career. He never exalted himself by degrading others; never enriched himself by impoverishing others; never surrounded himself with personal comforts and luxuries by depriving others of the same; but always exemplified the opposite spirit and purpose. Nor did he ever countenance or encourage his disciples in acting contrary to the same spirit and purpose by which he was animated and guided. In respect to this as to every other virtue and to the whole course of their lives, he enjoined upon them the imperative duty of imitating him. Recall his searching and beautiful exhortation with its accompanying promise, "Take my yoke upon you and learn of me; For I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest to your souls." — *Matt.* xi. 29. Also his precepts, "Whosover

shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven." — *Matt.* xviii. 4. "Whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." — *Luke* xiv. 11. "Whosoever will be chief among you let him be your servant; even as the son of man came not to be ministered unto but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." — *Matt.* xx. 27, 28. "If I, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done unto you." — *John* xiii. 14, 15.

Well did his Apostles reiterate and magnify their Master's example and precepts. Thus, Paul, as a faithful representative of them all, says; "These hands have ministered to my necessities and to those that were with me. I have showed you all things, how that so laboring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'" — *Acts* xx. 34, 35. "Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than themselves." "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." — *Phil.* ii. 3, 5. "Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering." — *Col.* iii. 12. Are not these precepts "like apples of gold in pictures of silver?"

Such is the pure Primitive Christianity in respect to this fundamental virtue of humility. Can we conceive of anything higher, sublimer, or more beautiful

in this branch of morality? What if nominal Christendom had always exemplified this exalted virtue! What if the professed Christian church had done so! What if a single denomination of those bearing the Christian name! What a glorious sight would we behold if a regenerate Church should arise to do this? a regenerate Christendom? a regenerate world? Let these questions suggest their appropriate answers and a thousand wholesome comments not now convenient to be made. And let us farther inquire if there be any defect in the primitive theory of the essential worth and importance of the virtue of humility in the Christian system of morality and in the rightful ordering of human life? Or any fault to be found with its illustrious model, the Founder of our faith? Can individuals, families, communities, nations, or the race of mankind, ever be truly holy and happy without such humility as has been set forth? Is not pride in all its phases and manifestations an offence against pure Christian morality and a bane to human welfare? Who can deny, dispute, or doubt the truth implied in these interrogatories?

What then can we do individually and socially, in behalf of this cardinal virtue against its vicious opposite; — to embrace, cultivate, cherish, and promote pure humility among men — to abjure and renounce pride and exterminate it from our own hearts and from the world? Moral fidelity and progress imperatively demand that we do our best in the furtherance of those important ends. We all detest pride in other people. Why can we not detect and abhor it

in ourselves? We all admire and commend humility in those about us. Why can we not nourish it in our own hearts and exemplify it in our lives? If we look up to our heavenly Father, the greatest and best of beings, the infinitely perfect One, behold, we find in Him the most wonderful and sublime humility. The splendors of His throne shine forth in unpretentious simplicity and severity; they fill the vast reaches of universal being with their unconscious glory. He does not hold himself in any proper sense above and aloof from the least of the creatures He has made. Not a being or thing in His far-reaching dominion is beneath His notice and His care; not a single soul bearing His image and likeness, however lowly, degraded, or sinful, is beyond the reach of His tireless vision or of His merciful providence, — no, not a worm of the dust or a mote in the sunbeam is left unguarded and uncared for by Him. No arrogance or haughty disdain and contempt ever brings reproach upon the name of the Most High and Most Holy, or in any way vitiates the order of His government in any department or province of His vast empire. "He is good to all and his tender mercies are over all his works."

So if we contemplate His model son, as he lived, suffered, and died here upon earth, or as he reigns in mediatorial glory above, no self-exaltation or contemptuous pride stains his royal robe or disfigures the beauty of his holiness. What he would have his disciples be, he *was* and *is* — "meek and lowly in heart," "the same yesterday, today, and forever," perpetually rebuking our selfishness and pride, and

saying to us, "Follow me." If we aspire to enter the kingdom of heaven and be joined in holy friendship with the innumerable company of angels and spirits of the redeemed, it is well for us to know that no pride can have a place there. In that blessed realm the greatest are the humblest; the mightiest, meekest; and the most renowned are as innocent, teachable, little children. Do we pray that this kingdom may come to our world and that the will of God may be done on earth as in heaven? Then surely we cannot consent that pride should continue its arrogant rule among men, making them contemn, despise, trample upon, and devour one another. No; for all pride is of hell, a prolific source of discord, confusion, hatred, misery; while humility is of heaven, the condition of normal healthy growth in the powers and graces of the heavenly life and the promoter of order, mutual good-will, harmony, and happiness. Let us be sure of these holy truths and learn to think, to speak, to act — learn to *live* accordingly.

O Pride, thou haughty, hateful vice!
Chief of an impious clan!
We know from whence thou had'st thy rise
And how thy life began.

Crude knowledge was thy foolish dame,
And selfishness thy sire;
From these thy scornful nature came,
And these thy life inspire.

Thou art a subtle demon lust
In every votary's breast,
Assuming, lordly and unjust,
If not firmly repressed.

Thou makest man a rebel child
  Against his Father's throne;
A tyrant, arrogant and wild,
  Whose heart seems turned to stone.

Thus might usurps the place of right;
  The strong oppress the weak;
And foul revenge and cruel spite
  On suffering victims wreak.

But now Humility we hail!
  Of love and wisdom born,
The ills of Pride to countervail
  And overcome its scorn.

From God she comes with angel grace
  Displaying heavenly charms;
And bids a haughty, warring race
  Lay down its clashing arms.

Inspired by her, we God revere,
  His holy laws obey;
We treat mankind as brethren dear,
  And for all nations pray.

And thus inspired we walk with God,
  And dwell in peace with men;
Nor shrink from truth's correcting rod,
  E'en though it gives us pain.

So may we life's best lessons learn,
  Gain from its ills release;
And, as we sin and folly spurn,
  Find everlasting peace.

DISCOURSE IX.

ON SELF-DENIAL AS A FUNDAMENTAL VIRTUE.

"Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." — *Matt.* xvi. 24.

In my last discourse I discussed the subject of Humility, which I declared to be the primary virtue of pure, primitive Christian morality. In the present one I will treat of Self-denial for righteousness' sake, as the next in order according to the classification which I make of the general matter under consideration. This virtue is closely related to humility and like it is equally a constituent element of piety, as it is of morality. But at present we are to regard it only in its relation to the latter.

What then is Self-denial for righteousness' sake, as I am pleased to phrase the theme now claiming attention? Let us analyze and define it. What is self, or selfhood, as commonly used and understood? It is one's own proper individual being, as distinguishable from all other beings and things; each one's own constitutional, organic personality; that which he or she means by the terms, "I, me, or myself." What is self-denial? It is the withholding from one's self or refusing to share some gratification, pleasure, or possession, in some respects very

desirable, for the time being or it may be permanently. And what is self-denial for righteousness' sake? It is the rejection of some such gratification, pleasure, or possession, from a conviction that it is wrong, or not best, all things considered; that it is contrary to one's highest sense of duty either to God or man, and hostile to the divine government and to the general welfare and happiness. It is doing this under the conviction named, however disagreeable, trying, or even painful such action may be. Indeed the idea of self-denial usually implies something disagreeable, trying, or painful; and the merit of it is proportioned to the extent to which these elements enter into or are consequent upon its exercise. It is therefore sometimes expressed in the phrase "Taking up the cross," as we find the thought repeated in our text.

What does self-denial for righteousness' sake imply? It implies (1) That self-gratification is sometimes wrong, sinful, and evil. (2) That in such a case, self-denial is an imperative duty — indispensable to true personal righteousness. And (3) That there is in human selfhood a central power, a pivotal faculty, capable of determining whether one will gratify or deny self in any supposable or actual case. Reject either of these three implied truths and logically there could be no such virtue as self-denial for righteousness' sake. Assume that self-gratification is always right, and then there will be no need of self-denial; no call to practice it, no good to come from it. Assume that self-denial is never an imperative duty, and it must be either contrary to duty or a

matter of indifference, morally considered. Assume that man has no power of choosing and determining amid conflicting influences whether he will gratify or deny himself, then he is irresponsible — no moral agent and not a subject of whom duty can be predicated.

But I hold the three implied truths I have named to be absolute truths. Primitive Christianity takes them for granted, and our best experience demonstrates their reality. We find ourselves constituted and organized in such a manner that though all our faculties are good in their place and when rightly exercised, yet are they all more or less liable to get out of their divinely appointed order and to be wrongfully exercised. We find that we have animal, intellectual, and religious capabilities, each of these classes craving their respective peculiar satisfactions; we have also appetites, propensities, inclinations, tastes, passions, of a corresponding animal, intellectual, and religious character. We find, furthermore, that the different groups of faculties which we by birthright possess, often oppose and countercheck each other; that the desires or cravings of the lower groups are sometimes in open conflict with the impulses and demands of the higher, causing a tumult of the native forces within the breast which it is extremely difficult if not impossible, for the time being, for the central, determining power which we name the will to control; that lust, sentiment, reason — the conflicting agencies — cannot be harmonized and made to act in unison for the development and perfecting of character except the will,

sanctified by the divine Spirit, be able to govern them and hold them subservient to a common exalted and beneficent purpose; and that until this high and noble attainment be reached, or at least approximated, man is a discordant, disorderly, discontented being — more or less unhappy, if not lamentably miserable. All this will be readily granted by people of average intelligence and reflection.

What then is the grand desideratum? the first thing to be sought after in view of existing facts, as we have noted them? What but the harmony and co-operation of all our constitutional endowments, of all our native powers? But this can be accomplished only by bringing them each and all into proper order and exercise as respects one another and the aggregate whole, so that the animal, the mental, the moral, and religious natures shall stand in their designed relationship and gradation, and discharge their respective functions according to the supreme divine laws of their being. This cannot be effected without much persistent though temporary self-denial for righteousness' sake. Why? Because our selfhood is pleased and gratified for a time with such enjoyment as comes through its predominant and most active faculties, though they be low and disorderly; and it is these that are generally and naturally in the ascendant during the rudimental stages of human life and history. "First the natural"; that is, the fleshly, the sensuous; "afterward that which is spiritual" — the intellectual, the moral, the religious. Such is the order of human develop-

ment and progress as illustrated in individuals and in the race. Hence, though the lower has at present an advantage over the higher and holds supremacy in both thought and conduct, and though the delights of today may involve miseries for tomorrow and a pound of present pleasure may entail upon us a ton of future regret and pain, yet are we prone to snatch with eagerness what now charms and gladdens us, regardless of the inevitable consequences of sorrow and distress sooner or later to be visited upon us. We dread immediate discomfort and privation — the cross now offered us, even though they are indispensable to the attainment of incomprehensibly superior good, far more than we prize the benefits and blessings to be gained thereby — the crown of triumph and of endless rejoicing. And this will continue, as most natural, so long as the lower principles within us hold the mastery of us against the higher and yield their legitimate fruits in our experience. For thus long we are of the gross and animal mind, or, as Paul terms it, "carnally minded," the result of which is death — moral death — death to the highest and noblest capacities and possibilities of our being. And death in this sense is but the precursor of unrest, discontent, wretchedness.

Hence it is that vast multitudes of our fellow-men are disappointed of their desired happiness and other multitudes are sadly and hopelessly miserable. The desire for happiness is a native instinct of the human heart and all men have that desire quickened within them,—a burning thirst it is with many people, but they fail of it by mistaking either its nature and

character, or the conditions of its attainment, or both. With most persons, the gratification of the sensibilities and tastes, the pleasure of self-indulgence, a momentary rapture or revelry of the emotions, is happiness. With others, happiness is closely allied to worldly success, the gaining of wealth, distinction, honor, fame, outward display, more or less refined luxury, and these are therefore laboriously struggled for as essential to it, though the struggle be often in vain. Still others, higher in the scale of advancement, seek it in the pursuit of worldly wisdom, in the realms of science, philosophy, literature, or some other purely intellectual activity or possession. Indeed the roads to expected happiness and the means of securing it are indefinitely various. But if blindly or selfishly sought, if sought for its own sake or in neglect or defiance of moral considerations — in contravention of the law of righteousness or the good of mankind, by whatever road or means, the seeker fails. God, in the very nature of things and by the laws of His righteous government, has decreed His inevitable disappointment. And we ought to rejoice that it is so; for disappointment in all such cases is as wholesome to him who experiences it as it is sure. It is salutary to all concerned, for by it they learn wisdom and are corrected of what only does them harm.

Primitive Christianity in its purity proclaims the Fatherhood of God, the brotherhood of man, the unity of all real human interests, the transcendent reality of immortal existence, and the necessity of bringing into true orderly exercise all our constitu-

tional faculties as the condition of pure and lasting happiness. This result can be wrought out only by more or less of self-denial. Yet self-denial is never required of us for its own sake but only for righteousness' sake; and for that in those cases alone in which self-indulgence is really sinful or contrary to the divine order; nor even then against the absolute good of the individual concerned but for his highest good, as consistent with the highest universal good. Thus we are brought to the precise point now under consideration, to wit: — The importance of self-denial for righteousness' sake, as one of the fundamental virtues or essential elements of pure Christian morality.

This morality, as already defined, includes the duties more especially which man owes to himself and to his fellow-creatures. Man owes to himself those duties which are needful to promote health, development, and general well-being, physically, intellectually, morally, and spiritually. Every violation of those duties is harmful and to a greater or less extent suicidal. Man owes to his fellow-beings the duties implied in the second great commandment, in the golden rule, in the injunction; — "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you." Every violation of these duties is harmful to the neighbor and to a greater or less extent fratricidal. Man owes to those orders of being above and below himself, those duties which their natures and the eternal fitness of things render just, reasonable, and beneficent; from the archangel

in heaven on the one hand to the worm of the dust on the other. To violate these duties is to war against the general laws of order and the universal good. And all violations of these several classes of duties are offences more or less flagrant and criminal against the primitive morality of the Gospel of Christ.

But these several classes of duties cannot be discharged to the fullest extent of human responsibility without the exercise of more or less self-denial — without often taking up the cross. Do we not clearly see that multitudes of people are enfeebled, diseased, incapacitated for useful service, and even killed, by intemperance, by the disorderly indulgence of their appetites and carnal lusts, by various kinds of self-abuse? Why? Simply and solely because they will not deny themselves wrong and harmful gratifications. Do we not see that many remain ignorant, foolish, undeveloped in mind, either because they will not be at the necessary pains to learn, or because the more favored in the same regard will not bear the cross of teaching them without immediate reward? Is it not obvious that hosts of our race are vicious and criminally sinful for the same essential reason; because they will not deny themselves the indulgence of some inordinate appetite, base passion, or unhallowed desire, or because those who might instruct them in the principles of virtue and lead them in the way of a better life will not be at the trouble of doing so? And there is no help for those who are in such a case without self-denial for righteousness' sake. Christ himself cannot save

them otherwise than by inducing them to take up the cross and follow him. He bore his own cross and was made perfect through suffering. So must it be with us in the respects now under consideration, or we become guilty of immoralities more or less injurious to ourselves and therefore proportionally worthy of reprobation.

If we turn now to that kind of gratification which works mischief and injury to our brethren, it is even more wicked and blameworthy. It is surely bad enough to abuse, injure, and despoil one's self; how much more to abuse, injure, and despoil one's brother or sister of the family of God? Yet who ever neglected or wronged a fellow human being but to gratify some selfish propensity, impulse, passion, or lust? For what does any one defraud, slander, oppress, corrupt, rob, wound, kill another, or injure him in any way as to person, property, reputation, or character? Seldom, if ever without some expectation or motive centering in self; some purpose of self-gratification. It may be refined or gross and sensual; substantial or fanciful; cold and calculating or impulsive and passional; the *morale* of the act is the same. The principle involved is the same whether the object sought be to mount a throne or secure an office, to gain a fortune or procure means to buy an intoxicating draught, to win military glory or pugilistic fame, to satisfy an aesthetic taste or a perverse lust, to gratify a mere prejudice or whim or indulge the spirit of revenge, jealousy, and malignant hate. No matter what, the controlling motive or purpose is the same, and self-denial is the effect-

ual preventive of all such forms of iniquity. Primitive Christianity therefore enjoins upon us this virtue of self-denial in regard to anything and everything, however pleasurable or satisfying to ourselves, which we cannot have or do without disobeying the same great command in its widest application; — "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." Under that command as under the golden rule and the injunction quoted, "Love your enemies," etc., we find in abundance denials of self to practice and crosses in imitation of Christ to take up. They are all of the same wholesome nature and he who in good conscience can be faithful in any one of the duties involved and required of him can if he will be faithful in all.

Nor must we forget another class of self-denials to be regarded for righteousness' sake. I refer to the many omissions and neglects by which we often wrong ourselves and our suffering brethren. They usually come through sheer thoughtlessness, indolence, love of ease, and want of kindly consideration. There is really as sinful self-gratification in these as in other cases. Some people are so indifferent to others' condition, so fond of their own comfort, that it is a burden to rouse themselves from their lethargic state and engage in any useful calling, — a trial to be interested in the well-being of those about them or to extend to them sympathy and help in time of need. But Primitive Christianity prompts to a tender regard for others and enjoins activity in aiding them and diligence in every good work. And this to avoid being a burden to fellow-men and at the same time to have the means of aiding the less

fortunate and destitute in society at large. It has a cross for the listless, the indifferent, the unconcerned, and the lazy, as well as for other self-seeking offenders against their own and others good.

And if we apply the same principles to our treatment of the lower orders of creation, we shall find that while we are allowed to use them in such ways as shall conduce to our own and our neighbors' sustenance, safety, comfort, and happiness, we are forbidden to abuse or torture them, or to inflict upon them needless pain, even in taking their lives, as we are privileged to do in the case of beasts of prey in order to preserve ourselves and others from harm by them, or in other cases for the purpose of using their flesh for food. To overwork or underfeed, to neglect or mercilessly beat, those domestic animals to which we owe so much for the varied service they render us, is an injustice of which we should never be guilty; a sin to be repented of as soon as possible and put forever away. To set ferocious and quarrelsome brutes in hostile array with each other, as in some of the bloody sports of the ancient Roman arena or the modern bull-fights of Spain, bespeaks a savage nature — a nature as yet unblessed by the spirit of Christ and untrained in the love of his Gospel. Even the most vicious and dangerous of animals, like the tiger or hyena, and the most venomous of serpents are to be spared all needless cruelty and suffering at the hands of man in his endeavors to save himself and others from their ravages or to exterminate them altogether.

But some may say that I am carrying the princi-

ples of Christian morality to a very great extreme and spinning my theories exceedingly fine. No more so than the spirit of Primitive Christianity requires. No more so than is reasonable and just. No more so than is requisite to the highest type of character or to the designed well-being and happiness of the whole creation of God. What do we want of a professed Christian morality that is barbarous, semi-barbarous, or merely civilized according to the crude standard of the world as it now is? Such a morality would be hardly worth having, much less devotedly loving, living for, and unreservedly promoting. For it would do little in the way of lifting the soul out of its selfishness and sin, or the world to a higher level of righteousness, brotherhood, and blessedness than that which it now occupies, and which is characterized by innumerable evils and miseries. We want a morality that is complete and perfect in itself, that cannot be transcended, the fruits whereof are holiness and happiness, quietness and assurance forever. And such a one we have in Primitive Christianity; and it becomes us to hear, reverence, and obey its requirements touching this cardinal virtue of self-denial for righteousness' sake, as communicated to us in the New Testament Scriptures, the testimony of which can be apprehended by a few sample passages.

The first that I quote is Luke's version of the text: "If any man will come after me let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same

shall find it. For what is a man advantaged if he gain the whole world and lose himself or be a cast-away?" — *Luke* ix. 23–25. Of a similar purport are the following: "Whosoever doth not bear his cross and come after me cannot be my disciple." — *Luke* xiv. 27. "If thy right eye cause thee to offend, pluck it out and cast it from thee; for it is better that one of thy members should perish than that thy whole body should be cast into hell." — *Matt.* v. 29. "If ye live after the flesh ye shall die; but if ye through the Spirit do mortifiy the deeds of the body ye shall live." — *Rom.* viii. 13. "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanliness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness which is idolatry." — *Col.* iii. 5. "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation to all men hath appeared, teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world." — *Titus* ii. 11, 12. "We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let every one of us please his neighbor for his good to edification." — *Rom.* xv. 1, 2. "Present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." — *Rom.* xii. 1.

Such is the primitive Christian doctrine of self-denial for righteousness' sake. Do we reject it? If so, we so far reject Christ and will not be his disciples. Turning away from his standard of morality, we shall set up one of our own, and in the order of nature and providence must take the consequences

of such action. What will they be? (1.) We shall have a low, selfish, linsey-woolsey, fluctuating moral ideal, modeled after the customs and fashions of the age, which will produce in us a cheap, common-place type of character — not one of superior excellence, of solid strength, and of commanding influence and power for good in the world. (2.) We shall be in great danger of transposing pleasure and pain, of making a little present enjoyment cheat us out of untold future satisfaction and delight, of bartering a small momentary cross for one much more burdensome and painful in the end. (3.) We shall sow in our own natures the seed-grain of selfish gratification and carnal pleasure after the manner of this world, the harvest whereof, to be sooner or later reaped, is disappointment, unrest, self-reproach, and misery. (4.) We shall be found fighting against the truth, against the progress of mankind, against our own and others highest good and happiness. (5.) We shall in the end utterly fail in our plans and expectations, lose a thousand opportunities of rising in the scale of being and of blessing the world, suffer inglorious defeat. For Primitive Christianity against which we rebel, based as it is upon the eternal verities and bulwarked by the strength of the omnipotent God, will in due time triumph over all its foes and reign victorious throughout the earth. The kingdom of God, for which it stands and whose viceregent it is among men, will surely some day come, and the divine will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Let us then be wise. Let us choose that cross of Christian Self-denial which insures for those who bear it a crown of life. Let us remember that there was never a truly great and noble personage, a real saint, a moral hero, a benefactor of his kind, an ideal character, who did not personify and illustrate in large measure this essential virtue of self-denial — never, indeed, an exemplary and praiseworthy father, mother, husband, wife, son, daughter, brother, or sister; never a really congenial and lovable associate or friend. It is a vital element of character — a constituent of the loftiest type of manhood and womanhood. Blessed are they who deny themselves for righteousness' sake, who are as regardful of others' welfare as of their own, who are willing to serve rather than to be served, who forego personal ease, pleasure, comfort, advantage, that they may with each passing year increase the aggregate of human joy, and "make the sum of human sorrows less"; who suffer injuries rather than inflict them, and who, like the great Exemplar, forget the wrong committed against them in their self-denying compassion for those guilty of such wrong. For truly it may be said, "Of such is the kingdom of heaven." And if I cannot make my final home with the like of these, let me sleep the dreamless sleep that knows no waking forevermore. And if I long for a heaven peopled after such a fashion, may I deny myself whatever would tend to make it a hell.

DISCOURSE X.

ON THE PRIMITIVE CHRISTIAN VIRTUE OF JUSTICE.

"The Lord * * blesseth the habitation of the just." — *Prov.* iii. 33.

"Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment." — *John* vii. 24.

The recognition of Justice as a fundamental virtue and element of character is not a distinguishing peculiarity of the religion of Christ, as is indicated by the fact that I introduce my present discourse upon that subject with texts from both the Old and the New Testament Scriptures. Nor is it limited to those two great forms or systems of faith. All religious and moral philosophers acknowledge its reality and its claims and enjoin the practice of it upon their devotees. So in a certain sense do those who are called Atheists, Pantheists, and Skeptics. The sense of justice seems to have been deeply implanted in the nature of man and manifests itself instinctively with the first movements of the moral department of his being, rendering it the most common and universal of all the ethical ideas or principles known to the world. In the abstract none deny its validity or the obligations it imposes upon men, but all, as they understand and apply it, regard it and

its requirements sacred. It is variously interpreted and employed according to the mental and moral status of any given individual or people, the age in which they live, and the prevailing public opinion and condition of society about them. Hence we have had in the history of mankind, and do have in a measure today, all possible notions or phases of justice from the most crude, brutish, and barbarous to the most humane, refined, and spiritualized. Still, in all cases and under all forms of administration the fundamental principle involved is the same, viz.: the obligation to respect the rights of all beings, render them what is their due, hold them to their proper responsibility, and treat them according to their deserts. Now Primitive Christianity does not deny or ignore the existence of this principle or idea of justice under other names than its own, or the wholesome ends to which it may be there directed and which it sometimes subserves, but it regards it and commands the practice of it on its highest plane of activity and in its most spiritual phases. But it does not expatiate upon it, magnify it, give it the prominence and the laudation which it is accustomed to receive under those other auspices to which reference is made, and for the reason that they usually make justice the *summum bonum* of all virtues — the apex of their ethical systems; the most central element of character and of righteousness. While Christianity, although holding justice to be *one* of the fundamental virtues and an indispensable one, makes it subordinate to a higher diviner virtue — surmounts it, crowns it, swallows it up with perfect

love. "The end of the commandment," says Paul "is charity," that is, love. And again, "Now, abideth faith, hope, and charity, but the greatest of these is charity," love. The teachings of Christ are to the same effect. He concentrates the whole law of God, the whole duty of man, in one word, love. In other words Christianity makes charity in its largest sense, perfect love, its moral apex — the grand, cardinal, coronal principle of virtue. While it imperatively requires us to do to others all that justice dictates, in deed, in word, in thought, to deal fairly and equitably with all other beings in even measure and exact returns, it requires a vast deal more; love to enemies, blessings for those that curse us, kindness to those that hate us, prayers for those that despitefully use us and persecute us. Yea, it demands that we forgive those who offend against us, have compassion for the wicked and undeserving, resist not evil with evil but overcome evil with good. This is in no sense relaxing the claims of justice or depreciating its awards; but rather fulfilling it and transcending its most beneficent characteristics. It is not tolerating or authorizing injustice in the slightest degree but obliging us to be incomparably more considerate, kind, forbearing, merciful, gracious, forgiving, than justice in its ordinary significance and use implies or demands. Not that justice is naturally and necessarily cold, unfeeling, heartless. In its most exalted and spiritualized phase, it allows and warrants a limited amount of kindness, clemency, mercy, and renders its awards accordingly. But there are boundaries and landmarks in this direction

which it must not pass. As the popular maxim has it, "There is a point beyond which forbearance ceases to be a virture." Not so Primitive Christianity.

But some one may ask, does not justice comprehend the highest goodness? Why make it a lower virtue than perfect love? Because I so understand the truth. Why distinguish the different virtues, humility, self-denial, truthfulness, etc., from each other at all? Because there is a natural difference between them which should be recognized and fully comprehended in the interest of intelligent thought. All moral excellences are included in the general term goodness or righteousness, just as all the members and faculities of a man's physical system are included in what is ordinarily called his body. And the component and separate parts of the entire body should be tabulated and clearly understood, each by itself, in order to a clear and complete understanding of the integral though complex whole. We must analyze and study the component parts of any subject in order to have a thorough knowledge of it. The effect of lumping, mixing up, shuffling together, and confounding natural distinctions, one elementary part of anything with another, or any one part with the entire whole, is misapprehension, indefiniteness, and manifold error. I belong to no such school of thinkers and reasoners. I can appreciate, admire, and enjoy the beauty of the rainbow as a whole, but I want to take cognizance of and comprehend, as far as possible, the seven prismatic colors that compose it, just as nature has produced, arranged, and placed

them, and blended them together. So when a person tells me that justice is goodness, that goodness is the perfection of moral excellence, and that there can be nothing better than that, he puts a part for the whole and confuses and obscures the entire realm of ethical thought and practice. As for me, I desire to be able to apprehend and duly estimate that complete and symmetrical union of virtues which go to make up what may be called a system of moral philosophy and which enter into and fill out a well-developed, all-sided, perfect manhood or womanhood "according to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ"; but I desire also to see and understand distinctly and precisely each particular virtue represented therein, to comprehend its peculiar nature, its distinctive office, its own underived and absolute worth, and its relation to all the other virtues and to the entire whole. And this is why I make the classification and specialization which characterize the present discussion.

I now return to the more direct consideration of the subject which this discourse is desired to expound and elucidate, the principle of justice as an essential constituent of the divine moral law, and its practice as a fundamental virtue, according to the teachings and requirements of pure Christianity. Justice in the Christian conception of it is to be regarded not in that cold, calculating, pitiless, inexorable sense which usually characterizes it in pagan philosophies, or even under Jewish forms of administration, demanding "eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burning for burning, wound for

wound, stripe for stripe," but in its most refined, sympathetic, spiritualized sense — in that manifestation and phase of it represented by the gentle Portia in the Shaksperian drama where she inveighs against the cruel demands of Shylock, saying that "earthly power doth then show likest God's when mercy seasons justice." Another form of this higher phase or manifestation of justice is clearly indicated in a passage of the Sermon on the Mount wherein Jesus says, "It was said by them of olden time 'Thou shalt not kill, and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment.' But I say unto you that whosoever is angry with his brother without cause shall be in danger of the judgment." — *Matt.* v. 21, 22. In other words the Master of our Christian Israel applies the principle of justice not alone to external acts which work injury to the physical frames of men, as was the case in Jewish jurisprudence, but to the feelings and passions of the heart, and, by reasonable implication, to the most secret and intangible emotions, affections, desires, and purposes of which human nature is capable. Even in these respects affecting more or less our relations to our fellow-men we must be just, impartial, and honorable, above deceit and guile.

We thus perceive that however far justice may in any particular fall below perfect love or any other moral quality of the soul, it is high above and utterly averse to all forms of inequality and cruelty — oppression, persecution, defamation, calumny, slander, evil speaking; even of envy, jealousy, suspicion, and ill-will. High above also and utterly averse to much of

what passes for fair and honorable dealing — at least for common decency and allowable conduct in commercial life, in politics, in legislation, in jurisprudence, and in the everyday intercourse of social life. The number of persons who have been pre-eminently just in deed, in word, in spirit, has been comparatively small in the history of our race, and, alas! is so still. No doubt there are and have been many reputably just, passably just, tolerably just, according to the standard of their times, and have been trusted and honored accordingly. But the vast majority of mankind have been unjust, tyrannical, oppressive, to a greater or less extent, ready to take advantage of their weaker, more unfortunate, or more foolish fellowmen, anxious to profit by the disappointments, misfortunes, and failures of others. It is largely due to the fact that there has been so much injustice wrought in the world, privately and publicly, by individuals, associated interests, social systems, states and nations that there has been and still is such a demand for benevolent action, for what is termed charity, for the help of suffering and wretched humanity. How have the strong domineered over the weak, the rich made vassals of the poor, the wise outwitted the ignorant, the more fortunate despised and frowned upon those less so, in neighborhoods and general society! How have nations and states enacted injustice into law, maintained oppressive customs and institutions, engaged in foolish and costly undertakings, fomented and waged expensive wars, thereby imposing upon the people at large, among them multitudes unable to bear

them, heavy burdens of taxation to weigh them down and multiply their distresses year after year, generation after generation, and age after age. Nor has Christendom itself been exempt from blame and condemnation in this regard; much less has it risen to the high level of that divine justice which dispenses equity and righteous awards, without bias or favoritism, without partiality or hypocrisy, to all classes and conditions of beings and things alike; which is the imperative duty of all men and the only sure standing policy of nations, and which is commended to us in the teaching and example of Jesus Christ. Even our own favored country, claiming to be the bright consummate flower of the world's civilization and the vanguard of human progress adown the ages was but yesterday the home and defence of chattel slavery, one of the grossest forms of injustice that ever outraged reason and the uncorrupt moral sense of highminded men, crushed humanity to the dust, made countless millions mourn, and called down upon its guilty populations the retributive, desolating judgments of Almighty God. Who can forget that for many memorable years it despised the few faithful men and women, who, loving justice and the right, demanded freedom for the oppressed and the breaking of fetters from the limbs of those in bondage held, and persecuted unto shameful extremes those prophets of the truth who testified against the monstrous iniquity and called the guilty in church and state to repentance and their duty to both God and man. Nor did it heed the counsels and warnings of such till the avenging fury came in

the form of civil war and at immense cost of treasure and of life, and, amid the tears of millions of its inhabitants, swept the giant curse away. But to this day no appreciable or equitable reparation has been made to the emancipated for the spoliations practiced upon them through many generations. Even yet do they suffer for the wrongs to which they were subjected by a professedly democratic and Christian people, as they must and will do for years and years ahead. So called Christian civilization in its most advanced and boastful forms has a long march of moral progress to make before it reaches the summit of simple justice to all beings and things, and then it will behold the loftier heights of perfect love as Christ taught and exemplified it shining with heavenly radiance far above them and wooing them, with tender, imploring solicitude, thitherwards.

But what are the plain dictates of justice as seen in the spiritual light of Primitive Christianity. I reply:

1. Justice dictates that we render to God our heavenly Father all that He has a natural right to demand of us, to wit: reverence, obedience, confidence, gratitude, filial love. To withhold these is to rob Him of His rightful due and hence is more or less sinful. This application of the principle of justice to human thought and conduct constitutes a necessary part of true piety. And so, subordinately, Christ, the angels in heaven, prophets, apostles, and all the great teachers, reformers, and benefactors of the human race have important claims upon us for appreciative and grateful recognition, and for the

preservation of their names, services, memories, and salutary influence in our day and generation for our own benefit and the benefit of the world, and for the perpetuation of the same to the same beneficent end unto days and generations yet to come. These we cannot ignore or contemn or neglect without incurring guilt and wronging ourselves and humanity at large.

2. Justice dictates that we respect the claims of our own natures and of our proper individual being. It requires us to maintain our own distinctive personality and not suffer it to be swallowed up and lost in any associated body or in the general mass of our fellow-men; that we hold sacred our reason and conscience against all opposition and usurpation, however much we may suffer thereby for principle's sake; that we subordinate the lower propensities, passions, and tempers of our natures to our rational, moral, and religious powers; that we bring all our faculties and endowments into subjection to the laws of divine order pertaining to their several departments, not perverting or abusing any of them but so using them that we may become the truest, the noblest, the best, in the totality of our characters, of which we are capable. All this is required in justice to our own constitutional, God-ordained individuality.

3. Justice dictates that we hold inviolate all the rights and prerogatives of our fellow human beings, without respect to persons, parties, or offices. Every human being has certain natural rights and prerogatives, and certain other conventional ones, which,

unless forfeited by crime or gross abuse, are to be regarded by his fellows as sacred, and as such to be treated with due respect. Among these are "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness"; also opportunities for education, development, progress, ownership of property, domestic and social privileges, reputation, and numerous means of usefulness and enjoyment. To deprive one of any of these or impair any of them by violence, oppression, fraud, calumny, or any other means, is manifestly unjust, the turpitude of the offence being proportioned to the superiority in any respect of the offender. The doctrine that "Might makes right" in any case is an outrage upon the principle of justice and never to be tolerated. That I am stronger, wiser, better than another — have an advantage over him in the matter of wealth, position, social prestige, or influence, renders any injustice I may practice towards him the more base and perfidious.

4. Justice requires the absolute return of kindness and good treatment for the same manifestations of friendly regard; but evil is never to be rendered for good, nor cursing for blessing in any possible instance. Moreover, it demands that due consideration be taken and proper allowance made for the unfortunate heredity, ignorance, imperfection, and other unpropitious or demoralizing circumstances affecting wrong-doers or enemies unfavorably; that reasonable forbearance be shown amid injuries, insults, and other provocations; that no sinner be adjudged more guilty than he is, all the circumstances of his special case being considered; that no

severer punishment be ever inflicted or sanctioned than the offender rightfully deserves; and that no clemency, mitigation of penalty, or pardon, be refused when a guilty party gives evidence of being worthy of it by sincere repentance, reparation of wrong done, or reformation of life. So far justice goes in respect to the treatment of offenders, criminals, and enemies, and no farther. The return of good for evil, the effort to reform the vicious and depraved, the forbearance to be shown the hardened sinner, friendliness for the incorrigibly wicked, declining to take the life of the malice-instigated murderer, turning the right cheek when the other is smitten, willingness to die rather than kill a desperate assailant, refusal to approve, encourage, or engage in bloody warfare, even though entered upon by governmental authority and waged ostensibly to repress an insurrection, repel an invading army, overthrow tyranny, or establish liberty — all this is outside and above the realm where justice dwells and holds imperial sway ; it belongs to the kingdom of perfect love, of brotherhood and peace; and is the dictate of that principle of moral order and Christian righteousness which transcends justice and is the crowning glory of the morality of the Gospel.

5. Finally, justice dictates that the legitimate rights of the animal world shall be acknowledged and duly regarded. There is a radical difference between a human being and an animal of whatsoever grade. The former is by far the superior of the latter and in a general way holds the latter in sub-

jection, having the power of life and death over it. It is man's prerogative to exterminate such animals as he finds to be dangerous, mischievous, or worthless, to slay others for food or for other useful purposes, to put others to service for his convenience and advantage and treat them as property. Nevertheless, animals have rights that man is bound to respect, as I have suggested in a former discourse. Among these are the right to be spared needless pain, all sorts of torture and protracted suffering. And in the case of domestic beasts, the right to be well-housed, well-fed, not to be over-tasked, and to be kindly treated in every way. Not to regard these manifest rights is to offend against a fundamental principle of moral order, to sin not only against the animal world but against God and incur deserved reprobation.

Such is the exposition I have to offer touching the subject of justice as an indispensable virtue or elemental component part of Christian morality. There is no occassion for citing precepts and testimonies in support of the positions I have assumed concerning it, or of the applications I have made of it to human conduct in the various relations of life. These are all plainly accordant with the letter of the Gospel record and even more with its spirit. In view of my statements and illustrations, what shall we say of the practical justice prevalent in the world, yea, in the nominal Christian world. Where can we find those who are strictly and altogether just? just in all the important particulars I have specified? just individually, socially, religiously,

politically, nationally, universally? Of one such, wherever or whoever he or she may be, we might well adopt the language of Jesus and say as he did concerning Nathaniel, "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile." But the number of those worthy of this encomium is small, certainly not as great as we could wish. Yet we will not despair. Though a multitude have not attained to the standard of perfection in this respect, though justice has not gained a very far-reaching and signal ascendancy, yet the seeds of justice have been sown in many a heart and have brought forth a goodly measure of fruitage in many a life. We have all, I trust, felt the germs of this divine virtue swelling in our own being and allowed them more or less activity in our thought and conduct. Let us nourish them and encourage their growth till they come to a generous harvest in a manhood and womanhood enriched by them in the department of our being to which they belong — in a character distinguished for justice and equity. And in us may there be fulfilled the ancient saying, "The path of the just is as a shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day."

DISCOURSE XI.

ON THE FUNDAMENTAL VIRTUE OF TRUTHFULNESS.

"But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth, commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God," — 2 *Cor.* iv. 2.

"Wherefore, putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbor." — *Ephs.* iv. 25.

What I said of justice in the opening sentences of my last discourse is equally applicable to the subject of the present one as a fundamental Christian virtue. It is not distinctively peculiar to the religion of the New Testament, but is common to all religions and ethical philosophies, which inculcate it and urge it upon their devotees as a vital element of personal excellence, at least in the abstract and preceptively. We can claim that Christ and his Apostles spiritualize, intensify, and more stringently apply the principle of truthfulness than do other great teachers of the world. But this is no slight pre-eminence to claim for the religion of the New Testament, since abstract principles and general precepts of the highest order are too commonly understood vaguely and very much neutralized, if not grossly perverted, in popular practice. Hence it is that every one praises truth and truthfulness and denounces their opposites, yet gen-

erally with very dim perception and imperfect application of the cardinal principle involved. What is needed is a thorough comprehension and application of that principle in its most spiritualized form. In the light of Primitive Christianity we may attain these results with great facility and success; not so much, perhaps, in the letter of exposition as in the deeper meaning and use of the essential spirit which lies back of all terms and phraseologies. According to this light, what is the moral significance of truthfulness and what its underlying principle? In response to these inquiries, I observe:

1. All conscious manifestations of mind are expressions of its thoughts, ideas, desires, intentions, emotions, or conditions, which are either real or unreal. If real, the expression is truthful; if unreal, it is false. Now all voluntary manifestations of mind, or nearly all, are addressed in the form of language to some other being or beings, with the intention of making such being or beings understand that the thought, idea, emotion, or condition is really what it is thus represented to be; at least, that it is understood to be so to the one who gives it expression. If so, he is truthful; if not, untruthful. The modes of human expression are various. We manifest mind by speaking in audible tones, by manual signs and gestures, by changes of countenance, etc., and even by significant silence. But no matter how we express ourselves, such expression must be true or false, wholly or in part. It conveys what to our own consciousness is a truth or a falsehood. It gives the party addressed a correct or a deceptive

apprehension of what exists in our own mind or consciousness. I use this term consciousness with caution here; because it may innocently mistake the reality in some cases and deem that to be true which is not so. Still the utterance would be truthful in spirit, if it were so to our own consciousness, though it might be contrary to fact. No person is a deceiver if he has innocently mistaken the unreal for the real. To be such, he must know that he is making a false statement or impression, or, at least, that he is communicating as truth what he has no sufficient warrant for believing to be such.

2. The forms of truthfulness and untruthfulness are various, yet are they alike in essence. We designate them by different terms suited to their respective peculiarities. Thus, in contrast: truth, falsehood; sincerity, hypocrisy; honesty, dishonesty; fidelity, treachery; veracity, mendacity; simplicity, duplicity; frankness, dissimulation; candor, sophistry; etc. When we use the terms truth and falsehood we usually apply them to some statement or declaration made in speech or writing which we deem true or false in itself. Sincerity and hypocrisy are terms which we apply to ingenuous motives or states of mind, usually in relation to sentimental, moral, or religious professions. When we speak of one's honesty or dishonesty, we commonly refer not so much to states of mind and heart as to some outward act deemed just and right, or fraudulent and wrong. Fidelity and treachery are words that we apply to cases in which people have or have not kept their promises or fulfilled their vows or solemn obligations.

Fidelity is faithfulness to trusts and assumed responsibilities; treachery is unfaithfulness to such, violation of voluntary pledges or engagements. Veracity and mendacity relate to habitual dispositions or states of mind. The prevailing disposition to speak and live the truth is veracity; the inclination to falsify, to misrepresent, and deceive is mendacity. By simplicity is meant the being and seeming what one really thinks, means, and is; by duplicity is meant equivocation, two-facedness, pretending to be what one is not. Frankness and dissimulation are words of kindred signification. To speak openly and without reserve, especially without keeping back anything of a sinister or harmful nature, is frankness; but a pretence of truthfulness in personal relations, a show of friendship when no friendship is felt, is dissimulation. So in conducting an investigation or a debate, if one manifests a desire to get at the truth, to look at the subject in question from all sides, he is to be credited with candor; but otherwise, if he misrepresents facts or distorts arguments or refuses to hear or consider evidence, it is no injustice to charge him with sophistry. But under whatever names or forms truthfulness and untruthfulness appear, they are essentially one and the same virtue or vice in contrast — the same things, variously expressed.

3. But why is truthfulness a fundamental virtue and untruthfulness a corresponding vice? For several reasons. First, reality, fact, truth, has a natural right to be recognized, understood, and honored; unreality, non-fact, falsehood, has no such right. Second, it is an outrage on nature and the eternal

fitness of things to put unreality in the place of reality,— to substitute error for truth, and to treat things which are not as if they were. Third, the good and happiness of mankind depend, in the long run, on the real and the true, not on the unreal and false; consequently knowledge of the real and true promotes the permanent well-being of men, while deception, illusion, and falsity tend to human disorder and wretchedness. Fourth, all substitution of error for truth is a fraud upon humanity — an act opposed to the highest interests of society and to the divine order of the world. Fifth, whoever consciously invents, propagates, or practices what is erroneous and false, not only wrongs his kind thereby but himself; paralyzes the forces that promote his own moral progress and impart strength, purpose, dignity, and honor to his own soul.

For these and many other reasons, God forbids untruthfulness and demands of His human children truth and veracity. He has done so through all natural and revealed religions, through all moral philosophies, and I might add through the common reason and judgment of mankind.

4. Again, I remark that truthfulness depends mainly on the love of truth for its own sake; I mean the love of perceiving, appreciating, and embracing all things, material, mental, moral, spiritual, according to their absolute reality. This is the great underlying principle of truthfulness. Whoever is so unscrupulous, or careless, or so prejudiced as to feel little or no love of truth *per se*, cannot be thoroughly truthful and worthy of confidence, but

oftentimes, if not continually, unreliable and treacherous. This is why there is so much double dealing and dishonesty in the world. Comparatively few people have a profound love of the truth for its own sake and contemn falsehood under its every possible form of manifestation. The great majority of people do not intend to be untruthful, to practice duplicity and fraud, to put falsehood for fact and reality, but they are so inconsiderate, so careless, and so easily influenced by fair seemings, that they are swept along almost passively into the turbid stream of misrepresentation and deceit. They do not take pains to distinguish in all cases the true from the false. Besides, it is often easy and convenient both to cheat and to be cheated; as it is more or less difficult and uncomfortable to be wiser, more reliable, more devoted to the truth, than the multitude. This requires one to do much sober thinking, to forego considerable present advantage, to be deemed eccentric, to lose the exhilaration of popular sympathy, and to endure more or less neglect if not scorn and contempt. Nevertheless it pays a hundred fold in the end to be truthful and put one's self on the side of truth.

A great difficulty to be overcome by ordinarily sincere and honest minds is that error and falsity not only often assume the raiment of truth, but actually have much of truth intermingled with them. There is very little unmixed falsehood in the world; as there is little counterfeit coin without some grains of precious metal. The counterfeit is thus rendered less distinguishable from the genuine and more cur-

rent than would otherwise be the case. So with many untruths. We must therefore exercise discretion in rendering judgment and moderate our blame in many cases apparently worthy of severe condemnation. People deceive others because they are themselves deceived. They mistake mixed truth for pure truth and thereby work mischief and harm. The number of conscious, bare-faced, open hypocrites and liars is smaller than rash, indiscriminating judges are apt to assume; though doubtless there are too many of them. We must be careful not to set down as wilful sinners in this regard half of those who practice untruthfuluess in some of its manifold forms; for many are its unconscious and unwilling dupes and instruments. Nevertheless, we should abhor the sin, even when in strict justice we ought in some measure to absolve the sinner; abhor uncompromisingly all error and falsity, however sincerely it be mistaken for truth. And we can never attain to eminent truthfulness and veracity ourselves without loving and honoring truth in the spirit of truth and for its own sake. We must desire most intensely to know, believe, appreciate, and embrace all realities necessary to our sustenance and development in every department of existence. We must earnestly pray to be preserved from all kinds of misconception, delusion, and error; to view ourselves and all that pertains to us only in the light of the eternal reality; and to regard in the same light all material, mental, and spiritual beings and things within the range of our study and contemplation, from the utmost conceivable heights to the lowest abysses. No matter

whether any truth or fact brought to our notice be beautiful or ugly, agreeable or disagreeable, popular or unpopular, profitable or unprofitable at present, ancient or modern, coincident with our preconceived ideas and opinions or repugnant to them; whether held by saint or sinner, by Christian or pagan, by friends or enemies; if it commends itself, after fair investigation to our highest convictions as truth, we must in good conscience acknowledge it, bow before it, bear witness to it, and stand uncompromisingly by it whatever betide. And *vice versa.* Any assumed truth or fact, however pleasant, popular, advantageous for the present, consonant with our feelings or prejudices; though commended to us by our dearest friends or by the best of men; if, upon examination, it is proved to our judgment and moral sense to be an error or a fiction, then are we to reject it and testify against it with equal determination and zeal, otherwise no one can tell into what slime pits of illusion, falsity, degradation, and shame, we may some day fall.

5. But, it may be asked, must we seek after, investigate, and come to an understanding in regard to all reality before resting from our labors; before finding satisfaction and happiness? Must we apprehend and master all truth before we can feel that we have attained the great end of existence and gained the approving favor of our Father in heaven? By no means. I said, all truth proper and needful to our growth, welfare, and happiness. Whatever of truth for the time being it is impossible, or improper, or unnecessary for us to concern ourselves about, it is

our duty to pass by and leave unconsidered. Of such there is an infinitude, and we are but finite, and by the very limitations of our nature cannot compass and comprehend the all of wisdom or of knowledge. "Who by searching can find out the Almighty to perfection?" and all His works and ways? Who indeed, can explore all the heights and depths of the material universe? Much more all the wonders and mysteries of the spiritual creation of God? There are however, ample fields for us to traverse and study; realities in abundance into which we not only can but ought to search; which it is not only proper but indispensable for us to understand; which it is highly necessary that we should know beyond all doubt or peradventure, in order to attain the great end of our being or gain solid happiness. In this regard and to the extent indicated is our duty plain and imperative.

Again it may be asked, must we bear open witness to all the truth made known to us? must we publish all the secrets confided by investigation or otherwise to our keeping? Not necessarily. The old adage is just, "The truth is not to be spoken at all times." There may be circumstances in which it would be unwise, improper, unnecessary, even wrong to make open proclamation of all we know. The very highest truth is not to be uttered unqualifiedly, without regard to times and seasons, without regard to the objects to be promoted by its utterance, or to the condition — the state of mind and heart of those who might hear it. Jesus had many things to say to his disciples, but he must needs wait till they

could bear them. The principle underlying and animating the duty of truthfulness requires not that we shall tell all the truth we have acquired, make public all facts of which we have knowledge, but that so far as we do speak or reveal ourselves we shall do so without misrepresentation, without making persons or things appear in a false light, without perverting realities or putting falsities in place of realities. Whether we speak or refrain from speaking in any given case, whether we reveal or withhold what we know upon any particular subject, depends upon considerations of propriety and obligation then and there involved. But if we utter ourselves at all, the duty to adhere strictly to the truth is absolute and irrepealable.

Once more it may be asked, does the morality of truthfulness forbid all fiction in literature, all idealism in art, all flights of the imagination in poetry, etc? everything but barren fact, unadorned reality, *the naked truth*? Is there no room or place within the limitations of human responsibility for any kind of disguise or simulation, for histrionic impersonation, dramatic representation, or illusory exhibitions of any sort? Answer: strict truthfulness allows such forms of fiction as assume to be nothing but fiction, and especially if they are honestly designed and adapted to teach important lessons and so subserve the best interests of humanity. But it allows of no fiction that pretends to be fact, or that is not calculated to instruct and inspire the minds and hearts of men and so promote some useful, salutary, and beneficent end; in other words, the cause of truth itself.

The same is substantially the case respecting all products of artistic skill not drawn from life, all dramatic representation and pictures of the imagination in whatever form they may appear. They must, however, stand for what they really are and put forth no false pretences or claims. They must be of such a character as not to permanently mislead or deceive those to whom they are addressed but to instruct and benefit them. If in any case they can be shown to have a contrary effect — if they induce a disregard for the truth or cause people to undervalue its importance or worth as one of the indispensable elements of character and as a primary duty of man, they are to be discountenced and condemned. In no case must there be open falsehood, no pleasing deception or illusion, that may not be easily explained or that is not understood to be such and not a reality. Any performance or exhibition that makes fiction appear to be fact, or that in any way conveys to the mind of the participator or observer a permanent false impression, is mischievous and reprehensible.

These strictures will apply to various kinds of amusement that have a place in modern society. So far as any form of merry-making or pleasure-promoting comes within the lines of restriction laid down it may be regarded as innocent and allowable. There may be much ingenious and studied secrecy, as in the preparation of Christmas presents or in arranging for a surprise party — a kind of temporary deception of course which is neither intended nor calculated to permanently mislead or cheat any one

but only to add to the pleasure of those concerned when all plans are consummated and all secrecy is laid open to the light, adding to the interest and charm of the occasion. The claims of truth under such circumstances are in no proper sense ignored or violated. The same may be said in substance of tableaux and kindred counterfeit presentments; also of theatrical performances and dramatic representations of whatever sort. These are not in themselves or necessarily sinful, or contrary to pure truthfulness; though liable to become so by perversion and abuse. I do not, like some others, dignify or exalt overmuch any of these expedients for recreation as means of moral discipline or schools of virtue, even while admitting that they may be of a nature to impart salutary lessons pertaining to personal character, domestic order, and social life; as in the case of "Six Nights in a Bar Room," and "Uncle Tom's Cabin." But their chief use is that of furnishing, when properly regulated, wholesome and meritorious amusement for considerable classes of people. Amusement is natural, useful, and desirable in its proper time and place, chiefly as conducive to health, sociability, and relaxation from the more onerous burdens of life, but it is not its function to teach religion, morals, philosophy, or science. Neither is it self-regulating, but requires wise and watchful supervision lest it run into excess or misuse and so defeat the very ends it is designed to secure. Under proper moral and religious control it will be innocent, salutary, and worthy of encouragement and support, thus fulfilling its legitimate and laudable office.

Something of corresponding import may be said of symbolism in religion; that is, the use of signs, like that of the cross, of emblems, like the bread and wine of the eucharist, of pictures, etc. for the purpose of awakening pious emotions in the breast, of producing moral and spiritual impressions upon the mind and heart, or of perpetuating such emotions and impressions already existing there. Such aids to devotion and virtue are, of course, harmless in and of themselves, and may be employed to advantage and approvingly so long as they are held strictly subordinate to and promotive of the ends in view. But they, too, are liable to abuse — are liable to usurp the place of the objects they should serve; so that the symbol would become a substitute for the thing symbolized and interest in or regard for the types and signs and badges of religion supplant religion itself in the thought and life of men. In such a case they would become hindrances and not helps to moral and spiritual health and progress, snares to entrap and enslave the soul and not wings to bear it upward and onward to heavenly heights. So that here as in other matters mentioned a wise caution and a discriminating supervision and care are needful.

Finally, it may be asked, does pure truthfulness forbid the manifold usages in social and domestic intercourse which are nothing more or less than polite and pleasing falsities, or lies of convenience it may be? Certainly, so far as they are falsities and lies and are intended or calculated to mislead and deceive. Their being polite, pleasing, conven-

ient, or even common, does not change their moral quality. Hypocrisy, deception, misrepresentation, falsehood, however smooth, smiling, complimentary, flattering, are morally wrong and reprehensible, and fruitful of mischievous results. They undermine character and destroy confidence. They form no necessary part of genuine politeness, hospitality, civility, or good manners, which are most needful to individual and social happiness. These spring from pure benevolence, kindly feeling, and sacred regard for moral principle in the heart. What is a smile, a welcome, a caress, a compliment, a flattering attention, if false? It is only a discourtesy, a sugared insult, an imposition, a cruelty indeed, and very likely to be discovered sooner or later, despite its charming disguise, and bring its perpetrator to shame. Truthfulness never requires us to be rude, coarse, ill-mannered, or roughly brusque, or impolite, even towards the unprincipled and wicked, though it may sometimes demand that we be plainly if not painfully severe in rebuking their follies and faults. Neither does it require that we tell disagreeable persons our opinion of them, that we express all our dislikes, make known all our thoughts and convictions, or even confess to human ears all our conscious imperfections and sins. Duty to God and man may and often does prompt us to hold ourselves in check and to keep from others many facts or truths with which we are conversant. But what we do divulge must be the truth and not a falsehood — must represent things as they are and not as they are not. True politeness, courtesy, urbanity, good

manners, are everywhere needed, but they should be disconnected with everything like dissimulation, hypocrisy, and heartless pretence, or they are an offence to good morals and to good men and women.

Thus have I gone over the ground proposed in the opening paragraphs of this discourse, examining the subject of truthfulness or veracity in the light of Primitive Christianity and in strict accordance with the dictates of reason. In view of what has been said it must be acknowledged that this virtue is fundamental to a perfect system of morality and of sacred and indispensable importance in the development of a noble type of character. Christianity would be a hollow and defective religion if it did not include and magnify this element of duty and righteousness, as it most emphatically does. Why then is Christendom so fraught with untruthfulness, deception, charlatanry, and fraud in manifold forms? Every one praises this virtue but how few practise it perfectly! How much pretentious respectability, morality, philanthropy, religion, there is in the world! To believe rightly, to sentimentalize zealously, to say *shibboleth* correctly, is deemed all important, but to live honestly, to be what you seem and seem what you are is of little consequence; and misrepresentation and falsification are no serious offences, especially if they can be made to help a good cause. Woe to the good cause that can be helped by such objectionable means! If it cannot be advanced otherwise let it perish. Who lies for any purpose, however excellent, is no true saint, reformer, philanthropist, Christian. Without the

truth and against the truth there is no absolute and enduring good. Therefore let us love the truth, seek the truth, obey the truth, exemplify the truth, and it shall be well with us, now, henceforth, and forevermore.

"Think truly, and thy thoughts
Shall the world's famine feed;
Speak truly, and each word of thine
Shall be a fruitful seed;
Live truly, and thy life shall be
A great and noble Creed."

DISCOURSE XII.

ON THE SUPREME VIRTUE OF PERFECT LOVE.

"Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them which love you what reward have ye? Do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? Do not the publicans so? Be ye therefore perfect as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."—*Matt.* v. 43–48.

In this passage we have presented to us the crowning excellence of primitive Christian morality — the enjoined obligation to cherish and exercise perfect love towards all human beings, regardless of race, nationality, character, or moral desert. No other religion or philosophy known to me ever required this extreme, unqualified, and unlimited manifestation of a kindly, humane spirit. Others teach the duty of benevolence in a general way, and some give it a wide application even toward offenders and enemies, but they all make specific limitations and justify the utter disregard of personal well being and even of life itself in extreme cases of guilt or hostility. Christ and his Apostles

allow no such limitations, qualifications, or exceptions, either in teaching or in practice. The two facts that they made no exceptions or limitations to their broad preceptive teaching, and that their example was in exact accordance therewith, are of the highest importance in this discussion. For they prove that those teachings were intended to convey the essential meaning and to have the universal application which they obviously express, and also that pure Christian morality is really as incomparably excellent as I have claimed. Had Christ and the Apostles left other precepts opposed or exceptional to those referred to, we should have been obliged to understand them in some restricted sense; and if their authors had in certain cases acted contrary to their seeming meaning, it would have proved either that they intended to have them understood in a restricted sense or that they were themselves deficient in the virtue they enjoined on their followers. If the former, these precepts mean much less than they purport; if the latter, then Jesus like many other great teachers of religion and philosophy, preached what he could not or would not practice himself. In such a case the less said in praise of Primitive Christianity the better.

It is unquestionably true that we can quote a few passages from the Old Testament which, taken by themselves and in the letter of them, seem to be similar to those found in the New respecting the supremacy of love. Some such may be found in the sacred writings of other nations than the Jews and in the expositions of moral philosophers gen-

erally; though such are tame in comparison with the ones now under consideration. But it is an imposition to quote the former as of the same nature and significance as the latter; especially to quote them as proof that Christ taught no radically higher morality than Moses, Confucius, Zoroaster, Plato, etc. I pronounce this an imposition for the reason that those ancient religious and moral teachers have left on record a multitude of maxims or instructions expressly authorizing and justifying retaliation and pitiless vengeance towards exceptional classes of offenders, which partially if not wholly neutralized what they may have said of an opposite character; also because they deliberately and habitually practiced revenge, injurious violence, vindictive punishment, and conflicts with deadly weapons, which was in open and undisguised opposition to the example of Christ.

I am scrupulously careful to start fairly in what I claim for Primitive Christianity respecting this doctrine of perfect love, in order, if possible, to preclude the various unwarrantable assumptions which deny that the positive teachings of the New Testament have any such radical, comprehensive, and uncompromising import as is indicated in their verbal form and as I claim. This claim I make and insist upon most strenuously not only because a fair construction of the letter of the text justifies such a view of these teachings, but because there are no other passages that modify or limit them, and because their authors devotedly illustrated their divine spirit in character and life. If it can be

shown that I am mistaken in respect to these two points I should have no tenable ground upon which to maintain the position I feel compelled to take upon the matter in question. If these are conceded my position is impregnable. Confident that it is so, I proceed with my exposition. What then is it my province to do?

1. To present a sufficient amount of preceptive and exemplary testimony from the New Testament Scriptures to make it absolutely certain that Christ and his ambassadors distinctly and uniformly taught this sublime doctrine of perfect love. The text at the head of this discourse is plain and explicit upon this point, and Luke's report of the same sermon from which I extract the passage, while changing the phraseology does not change the sentiment inculcated. He says; "As ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise. For if ye love them which love you what thank have ye; for sinners love those that love them. And if ye do good to them which do good to you, what thank have ye? for sinners also do even the same. And if ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? for sinners also lend to sinners to receive as much again. But love ye your enemies and do good and lend, hoping for nothing again, and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest; for he is kind unto the unthankful and the evil. Be ye therefore merciful as your Father also is merciful."—*Luke* vi. 31–36. I pass to other quotations: "Behold I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves; be ye

therefore wise as serpents and harmless as doves." — *Matt.* x. 16. "Then came Peter to him and said, Lord how oft shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, until seven times, but until seventy times seven." — *Matt.* xviii. 21, 22. When the inhospitable Samaritans refused to entertain Jesus and his disciples, James and John were highly indignant and wanted to resent it, saying unto their master, "Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven and consume them even as Elias did? But he turned and rebuked them and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them." — *Luke* ix. 54–56. When a certain lawyer asked Jesus to tell him who was his neighbor, he answered him with the Parable of the Good Samaritan, adding to it the injunction, "Go thou and do likewise." — *Ib.* x. 29–37. When Peter would defend him at the time of his betrayal, drawing a sword and wounding a servant of the high priest, Jesus healed the wound, and turning to the disciple said, "Put up thy sword again into its place; for they that take the sword shall perish with the sword." — *Matt.* xxvi. 52. When arraigned before the Roman governor as a promoter of sedition, he said, "My kingdom is not of this world; if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight that I should not be delivered to the Jews." — *John* xviii. 36. When expiring in agony on the cross amid the taunts and maledictions of his enemies, Christ

prayed for them, thus; "Father forgive them for they know not what they do." — *Luke* xxiii. 34. Of the two great commands on which he declared hang all the law and the prophets he affirmed that the second is like unto the first, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." — *Matt.* xxii. 39.

We turn now to the apostolic teaching: "Let love be without dissimulation." "Bless them which persecute you; bless and curse not." "Recompense to no men evil for evil." "Avenge not yourselves but rather give place unto wrath; for it is written, Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger feed him; if he thirst, give him drink." "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good." — *Rom.* xii. 9, 14, 17, 19–21. "Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted we suffer it." — 1 *Cor.* iv. 12. "See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves and to all men." — 1 *Thess.* v. 15. "Put on charity (love) which is the bond of perfectness." — *Col.* iii. 14. "Charity (love) sufferet hlong and is kind; charity (love) envieth not, vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, endureth all things." "Charity (love) never faileth." "And now abideth faith, hope, charity (love); but the greatest of these is charity" (love).— 1 *Cor.* xiii. 4–8, 13. "Love worketh no ill to his neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law." — *Rom.* xiii. 10.

"This is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? But if when ye do well and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called; because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that ye should follow his steps; who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth; who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not, but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously." — 1 *Peter* ii. 19–23. "Let none of you suffer as a murderer, as a thief, as a busybody in other men's matters. Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God in this behalf." — *Ib.* iv. 15, 16. These extracts clearly set forth the indisputable New Testament doctrine concerning this supreme virtue and crowning glory of the morality of Primitive Christianity, and need not be multiplied; and, as before stated, there is nothing in the entire scripture record that contradicts or invalidates them, or limits their scope and application in the least degree.

2. We now need to understand clearly the exact meaning of these passages, their bearing and moral force as helps in the development of character and guides to a divine life. They prescribe duties towards "the unthankful and evil"; towards enemies, injurers, persecutors, offenders, and sinners of whatever sort; not alone towards friends, well-disposed persons, benefactors, and righteous fellow-

men generally. Common justice dictates that we love such as are like ourselves, such as love us; and that we treat others as they treat us. But in Christian morality we have a higher rule of conduct. Here perfect love, which surmounts the granite pedestal of justice, lays extraordinary obligations upon us — obligations which the favored party has no right to claim, which characterize pure benevolence even unto enemies and personal offenders generally. But what is it in such a fellow human being that justly assigns him to the reprehensible class in which he is found — which renders him an enemy or offender? Not his intrinsic nature or personal selfhood in itself, but something in his actions, motives, feelings, which is morally if not malignantly wrong. It is the will or disposition or desire to injure or harm another; and especially such will, disposition, or desire towards one who has done nothing to deserve such treatment. This proportionally aggravates the guilt of the enemy or offender. And now what is it in the sense of the precepts quoted, to love such an one? Is it to cherish and feel a passionate fondness for his person, a desire for reciprocal fondness on his part, for intimacy and mutual attachment? Not at all. That is another kind or form of love; right in its place and under proper circumstances. But the love we are now defining is of a different sort. It is pure good will. Does it require us to ignore or underestimate the guilt of an offender in any case; to approve, encourage, fellowship him in his sin? Surely not. Does it forbid our remonstrating

with him, rebuking him, or restraining him to the extent of preventing him from doing harm, when it can be done without injury to him? No. What then does it require? This: that we desire and endeavor to promote his highest good; to reform him, curing him of his evil disposition; to make of him a friend, a kind, upright, trustworthy man. It requires that we cherish and manifest only a spirit of kindness and beneficence towards him, not of hatred and revenge; that we do him no harm; that we neglect no known means of converting him from the error of his ways and of bringing him to the enjoyment of the highest good possible to him; and that we patiently endure whatever suffering, self-denial, obloquy, martyrdom, may be incidentally unavoidable in thus faithfully exemplifying this pure fellow-feeling, benevolence, and charity. The duty under notice hath this extent and nothing less sufficeth it.

3. Is this duty, as I have stated it, reasonable and fitting in the nature of things and in the moral order of the world? I will endeavor to show that it is. Are all human beings created in the divine image and destined to an immortal and finally holy existence? So I have shown. Then every individual one of them is of inestimable worth, and ought to be treated as I have set forth, even the guiltiest, in order to insure to him the attainment of the highest possibilities of his being. The ultimate good of each and every one should be sacredly regarded. Is the doctrine of God's universal Fatherhood true? And does he treat all human beings as

his rational and spiritual offspring? If so, we ought to regard and treat them all accordingly, exercise love toward them all, "that we may be the children of the Highest"; be "merciful as he is merciful" and "perfect as he is perfect." Is the doctrine of man's universal Brotherhood true? And is the highest good of each and all the same? Certainly. Then it is reasonable to conclude that it is every one's noblest duty to seek every other one's welfare as he seeks his own. What would be gained by acting upon any other principle or from any other motive? Does it do any good to hate a fellow being? Does it benefit either us or him? Neither a particle, but results in more or less evil to both. Does it do any good to be careless or indifferent concerning another's well-being — to disregard or ignore in any case his real happiness? Never. It is really best for each and every one that every other should by wise and beneficent training and discipline be led so to develop and employ his physical, intellectual, moral, and spiritual capabilities as to enjoy to the utmost what they are able to contribute to the wealth, beauty, power, and glory of existence. This is what perfect love as defined and applied is designed and calculated to effect, and neither man, angel, Christ, or God himself, can produce that sublime effect in any other way.

But it may be objected that perfect love in God allows if it does not prompt Him to inflict innumerable terrible penalties and sufferings upon His guilty offspring and even to kill them, and why may

not we do the same under the same inspiration. Such objection is purely sophistical and misleading. The cases are not parallel. We cannot imitate our infinite heavenly Father in the exercise of powers absolutely above our finite capacities, but only of those that lie within the sphere of our limited ability. "*He* can kill and make alive." We cannot. *He* can, in His vast designs, cause the direst distresses to come upon His earthly children and turn them all to the most salutary account, if not in this life, in that which is to come. We have no power to produce restorative, reparatory, or sanctifying results in another state of being, nor even here beyond certain boundaries. Eternity as well as time is His field of activity, and His plans reach to issues far beyond the sphere of our responsibility. Therefore the assumed analogy between Him and us, so far as pertains to His larger purposes and operations, does not exist. Had we God's unlimited power and wisdom, wherewith to govern affairs in all possible states of being, and were we able to direct all possible consequences of our personal action as He is, we might then inflict pain and take life as He does. But, as it is, we may and ought to act on the same principle and in the same spirit that He does only in the finite sphere which we by our very nature are privileged to occupy. Accordingly we must never presume to impose any privation, pain, or loss, even on the most guilty, which we have no power to render salutary and beneficent. But who ever kills or causes suffering to a fellow-being in order to better his con-

dition after death? It is absurd to suppose such a case.

But another consideration here intervenes. In the order of His providence, God takes the life not only of sinners, but of saints and of multitudes of innocent children; so may we, if the objector's reasoning be sound. If He can do it in love, why cannot we? Or again. God as the supreme Ruler of all things kills every human being, sooner or later, why may not we kill any one we please? The argument proves too much; admits of conclusions at which every one's reason and moral sense revolt, and so destroys itself. The truth is, death, or the passing from this to a future life, is a feature of an infinite divine plan, and in whatever form it comes, by natural decay, by sickness, or by casualty, it is included in that plan and is to be justified, as its Author is to be vindicated, in the finally beneficent and happy issue, which is at last to crown the working of that plan and fill the universe with holiness and joy.

A much more plausible argument against the claim I make for the universal exercise and application of the spirit of perfect love, even to enemies and persistent evil doers, is that which affirms that we can sometimes save life, liberty, property, or otherwise serve the common welfare, by taking life — by the capital punishment of hardened criminals, by the destruction of enemies in war, or in some way causing harm to offenders, without regard to their particular well-being and happiness. This is the plea of expediency, and is based upon the doctrine

that we may do evil to insure consequent good. I cannot well deny this, as the world goes, at least in some cases, and yet I have very little doubt, that on the whole far more of life, liberty, and property has been sacrificed than preserved by what is termed justificable homicide, — injurious self-defence, war, and vindictive punishment — in the history of mankind. But granting the validity of the argument on the basis of worldly expediency or advantage, does that make the required exercise of perfect love less reasonable or obligatory than I contend for? Is everything right and best for mankind which is convenient and advantageous to all appearance in this short life? If so, are not injustice, falsehood, and many notorious cruelties right and best when important ends are to be gained thereby? Rather is it not better and more Christ-like to give up our life, liberty, property, than to be base and iniquitous? Common worldly patriotism says this; how much more religion, and especially Christ's religion, which teaches its disciples to surrender their lives and all temporal goods rather than betray their principles and lose their souls in the just condemnation of eternal verities.

Besides, let us remember that pure Christianity regards the human race as having been created for progress from very low to very high moral and spiritual conditions by a process of discipline and regeneration which should ultimate in that perfect love which is the grandest attainment of immortal beings, which makes man most like the all-perfect Father in heaven. Could such a religion reason-

ably propose anything lower than this, or enjoin anything less as the *summum bonum* of human duty or the crowning glory of its mortality? Certainly not; for had it done so we should have some day needed a new and nobler dispensation to have perfected the righteousness of mankind. As it is, another dispensation or revelation of a distinctively higher, more perfect character is neither necessary nor possible. And if this supreme virtue with the manifold duties growing out of it is too transcendent for human beings to exemplify to any great extent in the present age of the world, ought we therefore to deem it the less reasonable, or the less profitable to preach, or the less incumbent on men to endeavor to practice, or the less to be demanded of those who profess to be members of Christ's church and upon whom, as pioneers under him of human regeneration, he originally and specifically enjoined it? Surely not. Alas, what a blot it is upon a church bearing the name of Christ, that so small a fraction of its members are obedient to the requirements of perfect love, or are ready to acknowledge their obligations to obey them.

But I forbear a farther exposition of this incomparable subject. A thousand discourses would not exhaust it, especially in its multiform applications to human character and conduct in the various relations of life. I close what I have to say by commending the considerations presented to your candid, rational, conscientious judgment; praying, as the best of all petitions for you and myself, that we may never rest in the great struggle after holi-

ness and happiness, till, with the help of God's grace and of all spiritual ministries, we shall have above all other things "put on charity (love) which is the bond of perfectness."

DISCOURSE XIII.

ON THE PRIMITIVE CHRISTIAN VIRTUE OF NON-RESISTANCE.

"Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth. But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil [in this manner]; but whosoever smiteth thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also." — *Matt.* v. 38–40.

Having in my last discourse discussed the subject of perfect love as the supreme virtue of Primitive Christianity enjoined by Christ and his Apostles, I now proceed to a consideration of the legitimate manifestation of that virtue and of the application of the moral principle involved therein, in certain extreme cases of human experience where there is great temptation to ignore or abandon it. What those extreme cases are, or the more common ones, it is my duty to point out with all needful distinctness and perspicuity. They may be in a general way considered under a twofold classification, to wit: — (1) To resist and punish personal outrage upon ourselves or our friends by injurious or deadly force administered by our own hands. (2) To resort for defence, reparation, and punishment to governmental interposition and coercion by the use

of the same injurious and deadly force administered by so-called magistrates or officers of the law. All harmful or injurious force is of the same intrinsic nature as deadly force, and I treat them as the same in principle and as equally hostile to that perfect "love which worketh no ill." Instances of the two kinds specified have always occurred in human affairs and will occasionally occur until men shall have learned to overcome evil with good, or wrong-doers cease "to molest and make afraid." When they take place and call for correlative action of some sort on our part, they tempt our lower, animal nature powerfully, inciting us to resist punish, and, if possible, bring the offenders to subjection by actual or threatened violence and death-dealing power. There is nothing at which unregenerate and spiritually undisciplined human beings so revolt as at the doctrine that they must not fight with some sort of carnal weapons in defence of themselves or their friends; in support of liberty and human rights; and that they must not fall back upon organized governmental agencies backed by the strong arm and weapons of carnal warfare for the resistance, punishment, and subjugation of evil-doing men. All the religions of the world except that of Christ allow, sanction, and fully justify such conduct — conduct involving physical violence, injury, and death. So do all the ethical systems that have gained much acceptance in the world; so do all prevailing codes of law and jurisprudence. And so, indeed, do all popular notions of honor, valor, and manly self-defence. Hence it

is that so very few people can be found, even in Christendom, to accept the doctrine of Christian Non-resistance. And of the few who professedly acknowledge its truth in theory, a majority, I am grieved to say, fail to honor it and commend it to the world by consistent and uncompromising example in practical life. Nevertheless, it is the doctrine of Christ and his Apostles, and was the doctrine of the Church for at least two hundred years — a doctrine which its members faithfully illustrated in their relations to and dealings with each other and their heathen fellow-men.

Had Christ relaxed his stringent morality in its application to such extreme cases as I have named, and allowed his disciples to kill, wound, or otherwise absolutely harm offenders of a flagrant type, either directly by their own hands or through the agencies of worldly civil government, what would have been the inevitable effect? (1) To invalidate fatally the fundamental requirement of his religion to exercise perfect love towards all human beings, as set forth in my last discourse. For the exceptions would have made the rule null and void. (2) To undermine or greatly vitiate the sublime ideas which are the bases of that requirement, to wit: The Fatherhood of God, the brotherhood of man, the harmony of all real human interests, and the destined holiness and happiness of all mankind. (3) To endorse the carnal wisdom of this world which is forever pleading that there are numerous cases of conflicting interests in human affairs that render it impossible and foolish for us to love our

neighbors as ourselves, or to regard their welfare as our own. (4) To reduce the supreme excellency of Christian morality to a level with that of all other religions and philosophies, and so destroy its distinctive character. (5) To justify a large portion of the cruel homicides, persecutions, wars, and vindictive punishments which a degenerate church has sanctioned and sanctified since its unholy alliance with the state under Constantine in the fourth century. Were I fairly and fully convinced that this doctrine of Non-resistance is false, or was not taught and exemplified by Christ, my sense of logical and moral consistency would compel me to abandon the whole superstructure of my peculiar theology, ethics, and social reform. Nor should I have one unshaken hope left that the human race will attain any essentially higher moral state, here on the earth at least, than the general average of the past. This may sound like a wail of despair or the wild extravagance of thoughtless declamation, but it is to me a well-considered, sober conclusion of my best judgment. And whoever would listen candidly to my reasons for this opinion must feel, I am sure, that they can not be easily confuted. Many people otherwise worthy of respect and confidence seem to care very little for consistency in faith or practice, and learned philosophers sometimes affect to despise it as a slavish weakness of stinted minds. But I am not ashamed to avow myself a devotee of rational and moral consistency. I abominate all detectable incongruities between the several articles of one's creed, or different

avowed principles of truth and duty, as I do between his acknowledged belief or principles and his deliberate practice. If he professes faith in the universal Fatherhood of God, in the universal brotherhood of man, in the absolute moral obligation of the golden rule and law of love, in the idea that the highest good of each and all is the same, and in the immortal nature and destiny of all men; if such be his professed faith, I insist that he shall not represent God as a vindictive despot, or man as a venomous reptile, even when he acts like one; as fit only under certain circumstances, to be despised, maltreated, slaughtered, and, as far as possible, utterly destroyed. I will not knowingly indulge myself in any of these theoretical or practical incongruities and contradictions. This is why I say so emphatically, that, if compelled to give up the doctrine of primitive Christian Non-resistance, my sense of consistency would compel me to abandon my whole system of theology, ethics, and sociology, with all its grand hopes and promises for mankind. Happily, I am troubled with no such doubts or misgivings, and so am steadfast in my confessed system of truth and duty. But there are some misapprehensions respecting this special doctrine of Non-resistance, which ought to be cleared away in order to its just appreciation.

1. Some people understand that Christ addressed the precepts which enjoin this self-denying virtue to all mankind indiscriminately, in all conditions and relations of life, and at all stages of moral and spiritual development; as if all could and would

exemplify it, or try to exemplify it, as one of the primary duties of common worldly morality. They make the same mistake respecting the requirement of perfect love to all mankind, friend and foe, of which these precepts but indicate the legitimate application. But Christ was wiser than this misapprehension supposes. "He knew what was in man." He knew very well that the administrators of existing civil government would not and could not obey the law of perfect love, or exemplify the specific duty springing from it, until society, in its organic form, should outgrow and abandon all dernier resorts to deadly force. He knew that no one could or would live in love with all mankind, bless and curse not, and perform all similar duties, so long as selfishness, greed of gain, resentment of injuries, revenge, and cruelty reigned in his heart. He knew that no man or class of men, acting in, depending on, or needing the restraint of sword-sustained governments, would or could practice the golden rule and the doctrine of no harmful resistance of evil with evil. Such persons and classes belong to a moral plane far below that occupied by Christ — far below that which he called his disciples to occupy. He told such plainly that they could not rise to his required level except they were born again of the divine spirit, becoming as little children and taking up the cross daily. Of those thus re-born, he said, "They are not of the world even as I am not of the world." And to them, "Ye are the salt of the earth." "Ye are the light of the world." James thus states the case from his

point of view; "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first fruits of his creatures." —*James* i. 18.

It was those here represented who became the original disciples of Christ. They publicly confessed themselves to be his followers. They constituted the primitive church bearing his name, which was a divinely appointed though voluntary association regulated and governed, not, like worldly civil society, by arbitrary, external authority and brute force, but by the principles, precepts, and spirit declared by Christ himself, their teacher and religious head. The high calling of this church was to stand morally at the front of the procession of humanity, to lead it on to a truer righteousness, to leaven it with regenerating influences, to salt it with divine principles, to show it "a more excellent way," and so gradually convert it to pure Christianity and thereby bring in the kingdom of God. Christ therefore addressed his sublimest precepts more particularly to his avowed followers. He called them emphatically to the exemplification of his own distinctive righteousness. This was his only way of salvation from the evils of sin. He earnestly besought all to become his disciples and counted all such who from inward conviction and love were willing to take up their cross and follow him. But he coerced none. He over-urged none. He used neither violence nor craftiness to make proselytes. He flattered no one with prospects of worldly ease, advantage, or honor. He frankly set forth the responsibilities, the trials, and difficulties

they would encounter if they followed him, and declared that the blessings to be gained thereby were of a spiritual, heavenly nature, not carnal, earthly ones. No one was asked to join his ranks except from purely religious motives and for the highest ends. But of those who did join them he demanded fidelity, a corresponding life, self-sacrifice even to martyrdom should fidelity to his precepts and principles demand it.

And all this is true today. No one is required to confess Christ as Master and Lord unless he can do so in all sincerity, upon the terms plainly set forth in the Gospels. Nor is any one declining to do this and choosing to act on a lower moral plane denied due credit for whatever virtues he may possess, though they be not up to the standard of perfect love. But to those who voluntarily assume the position of disciples of Christ, yet revolt against his lofty morality and refuse to practice his precepts, his rebuke still sounds forth; "Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" What can be more reasonable than this, or appeal more impressively to our highest moral and religious sentiments?

Why then should any cry out that Christ's morality is too high and strict for the world, when it was never meant for worldly-minded people; that civil society is not prepared for it, as if it was ever intended for unchistianized civilians; that we can not carry on government, politics, commerce, war, etc, on Christian principles, as if the Master expected we could while enslaved to the customs,

fashions, and popular practices of the unregenerate world! It is indeed impossible for those to act upon Christian principles who have no conception of such principles, no aspiration to be governed by them, and no purpose or hope that they themselves or others shall live according to them this side of the grave. But must this be deemed true in regard to sincere believers in Christ; such as he prescribed his holy precepts for; those who are really born of the Spirit and are in the true discipleship of Jesus? God forbid! Their ruling faith, aspiration, hope, must be of a far higher type and order.

On the other hand there are professed non-resistants and friends of peace just as unreasonable as those referred to who make no such profession. They assume that the indiscriminate multitude can be brought to practice that "love which worketh no ill" as easily as they can be induced to espouse the Temperance, Anti-Slavery, Woman's Rights, and other secular moral reforms. More absurdly still, they call on civil governments, legislatures, and all kinds of milito-political authorities, to act on the highest principles of peace and good will, as if it were as possible for them to do this as it is to act on their own lower plane of worldly policy and reserved injurious, death-dealing force. In the very nature of things they cannot do this without a prior radical regeneration of human opinions, feelings, customs, and institutions; a regeneration to be attained only through a long process of enlightenment, moral growth, and spiritual development. This gross absurdity exhibits itself to an almost

ridiculous extent when in the midst of great wars, governments and military authorities are appealed to in deprecatory tones, to stop the tornado of deadly violence at once, "beat their swords into ploughshares," and inaugurate the reign of brother hood and peace. The result proposed in such a case is grandly good, but the assumption that it is possible under the circumstances is pitifully puerile if not ludicrous. Christ never contemplated any such instantaneous, wholesale, impracticable method of converting the world from its harm-plotting, war-promoting, death-dealing spirit and habit to the love and practice of kindliness, fraternity, harmony. He began to build his moral superstructure at the foundation, in the renewing of individual characters and lives, by the power of the spirit of peace and love and not at the apex. So should we.

2. Another misapprehension of non-resistant precepts is that arising from emphasizing the mere letter of them instead of their vital principle and spirit. Thus we must understand them to require, when one cheek is smitten, the actual offering of the other, as if to invite the assailant to smite that also; and when one article of clothing is taken unjustly from us we should immediately give up another to the aggressor. A little reflection, aided by the example of Christ, shows us that the passages referred to represent the principle and spirit which are to govern us in cases of insult, outrage, and injustice, however inflicted; that is, of patient endurance of the wrong done us, though repeated, without resorting to the old law of retaliation, "An

eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, wounding for wounding, and life for life." The meaning of the old ordinance abrogated by Christ is plain, to wit: that we may rightfully harm others, defensively or punitively, to the extent that they harm or attempt to harm us. This rule of conduct Christ absolutely forbids. His disciples must not resist in any such way. They must not retaliate or do harm to any one, whatsoever the provocation or temptation to such action may be. By that inhibition his disciples are bound to order their lives.

Others still see or think they see in these same precepts an injunction requiring entire moral and physical passivity towards evil doers, under all circumstances. We are not even to reprove, rebuke, remonstrate with such, or protest against their conduct, or oppose them in any way. No such inference can be drawn from the passages themselves, and it is disproved by their author's whole life and example. They do not prohibit the use of physical force, if it be uninjurious and beneficent; if it take the form of insistence, compulsion, or restraint that is calculated to prevent harm to the evil-disposed or others, or to benefit all concerned, according to the law of perfect love. It is the spirit of the requirement that is to govern in all cases and of that there need be no misapprehension.

3. Still others there are who maintain that the particular texts under review inculcate cowardice, meanness, and unmanly submission to all sorts of insult and aggression; nay, more, that they encourage insolence, injustice, and personal violence; and

so they scorn and reject them and the whole system of ethics of which they and corresponding scriptures form no inconsiderable part. This I count a reckless perversion of the truth. Do such passages as forbid the resistance of evil with deadly or harmful force imply that such evil is not wrong, is not to be exposed and rebuked; or that those committing it are to be excused, absolved from all blame, and treated as if they had committed no offence against God and man, or that they are in no proper sense the subjects of salutary and condign chastisement and retribution? Not at all. Did Christ ever forbid, by precept or example, the just rebuke, condemnation, and denunciation of any kind of wickedness by whomsoever wrought? On the other hand, he taught and practiced quite the contrary. Witness the admonition and censure he repeatedly administered, even to his disciples, and the reprobation with which he castigated at different times the Scribes, Pharisees, and hypocrites of his day. Did he himself ever cower or cringe in the presence of danger or hostile power, ever shrink from duty, ever show timidity or fear, ever act an unmanly part in any portion or circumstance of his earthly career? Never. Did he ever counsel his followers to tremble before wicked, haughty, malignant men, to basely abandon the post of duty, to abstain from proclaiming the truth and maintaining the standard of righteousness, even in the face of persecution and death? Far from it. He rather taught them to be brave and dauntless in battling for the good and true, to adhere to their principles

and bear their testimonies at all hazards, to prosecute their work amid perils and hardships and hostile opponents in a self-sacrificing spirit, even unto martyrdom. Is there anything mean, base, ignoble, unmanly, in all this? A brutish carnalist might say, "yes, under extreme circumstances; if life or great interests were at stake and might be saved or preserved by slaying a murderous assailant or a cruel tyrant." But I say, nay. It is noble, heroic, Christlike to suffer wrongfully rather than do wrong, to forfeit life rather than take life, to confront death with none but spiritual weapons and God's sheltering help for a defence, to say fearlessly to an assaulting persecutor, oppressor, would-be murderer, "You are my brother-man, child like myself of a heavenly Father, and I can do you no harm, much less take your life. Will you murder me or those that are dear to me? Will you stain your own soul with the innocent blood of one of your friends, who wishes you no evil, who is ready to die rather than injure you?" Is such fidelity to principle, such devotion to humanity, such loyalty to Christ cowardly, inglorious, contemptible? Palsied be the tongue that dare utter such a slander!

But it is furthermore supposed and sometimes urged that this Christian doctrine of perfect love carried to this extreme — the doctrine of Non-resistance — offers encouragement — a bounty, indeed, to robbers, assassins, and all sorts of aggressors upon the lives and rights of the innocent and worthy, by removing the fear on the part of such of being stricken down and put to death. To spare such and hold

their welfare sacred and inviolable is to stimulate their baser nature and promote their wicked designs. This is an assumption incapable of proof. In a large majority of cases, as history proves, the resort to deadly force is a failure as a preventive of vice and crime, and never converts the evil doer or saves a human soul. Nay, such resort and its manifold concomitants tend to keep alive the spirit of violence in the world and to multiply rather than decrease the vices and crimes that afflict and debase humanity and retard the coming of the kingdom of righteousness, brotherhood, and peace. Satan can not cast out Satan. Only Christ and his Gospel can do that. In ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, such morally heroic, self-forgetting goodness as I have indicated — the Christlike spirit and attitude — would humble, disarm, and overcome the assailant and often open the way to his reformation. It has done it in manifold instances and would do it in manifold more, if tried in confidence and holy love. Oh, that professed Christians would universally adopt and trust the Saviour's method of overcoming evil with good, of dealing with offenders, of reforming the vicious, of saving the lost! Only let unflinching courage and pure benevolence be united and coöperate earnestly with each other under the divine guidance and they constitute the mightiest, the most quickening, regenerating power in the universe. Should they ever fail to touch the heart and restrain the hand of an assailant and the martyrdom of the victim ensue, their ultimate moral victory, in the spirit world, if not on earth, would be the more

triumphant and glorious. Nay, I can but believe that the heroism and self-sacrifice in such cases displayed would increase the sum of human virtue here, and promote the spiritual progress and ultimate redemption of humanity in time as well as in eternity.

O heaven-sent Teacher, thou "light of the world,"
"The way and the truth and the life": —
Thy banner of love long ago was unfurled,
Rebuking all carnage and strife.

Thy church thou didst found on the earth to protest,
By precept and practice like thine,
Against every death-dealing, vengeful behest
Long sanctioned as wise and divine.

"Resist not with evil the injurer's hand,
But rather his wrongs meekly bear;
By goodness and mercy his vices withstand,
And still for his happiness care."

Thus spake thou, dear Lord, from the mount and the cross,
And taught us as one from above;
O help us, we pray thee, whatever the loss,
To walk in thy pathway of love.

DISCOURSE XIV.

CHRISTIAN MORALITY AND CIVIL GOVERNMENT.

"Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's." — *Mark* xii. 17.

"My kingdom is not of the world." — *John* xviii. 36.

"The powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God." — *Rom.* xiii. 1, 2.

"We ought to obey God rather than man." — *Acts* v. 29.

I could not do full justice to the primitive Christian doctrine of Non-resistance as I understand it without stating and explaining the relation in which it places those who embrace it to civil government. To clearly comprehend that relation we must begin its exposition at the the very foundation of human nature, and of organized human society with its various institutions. What is generically and absolutely natural cannot be annihilated or wholly suppressed by any finite power. But much that is thus natural can be varied and modified as to its form and expression almost to infinity. Again, whatever is generically and absolutely natural must manifest itself, act itself out, to some extent, somehow, somewhere, sometime. But the degree, manner, place, and time of its manifestation can be, as indicated, indefinitely diversified, by reason of the different conditions and circumstances under which it takes

place. Now let us apply these general truths to the original constitution of man, to human society, and to organized institutions. First, there is the individual human being,— body, soul, and spirit,— male and female. The male can by no possibility be made female nor the female be made male, however alike they may be rendered in many respects. There is probably an intrinsic distinction between the two which will last as long as they have being. So of individuality. There is something generically and absolutely peculiar in one person which renders him or her a distinct entity, separate from another and from all others. No two are exactly alike. They may be very much alike, in some cases almost indistinguishable; yet are they not the same but different individuals. They always will be so as long as they exist; it is in their very nature.

We look again and find that all human beings, male or female, have by nature certain appetites, propensities, passions, sentiments, faculties, which are the springs of all action and the counterchecks of each other. They are not equally powerful in all, yet they exist in all, active or inactive, in varying degrees of excitability. There they are, and they cannot be utterly extinguished without extinguishing the being itself. And they ought not to be extinguished, only modified, regulated, perfected.

In consequence of these native springs and reciprocal counterchecks of human action, all under the control of divine wisdom, we have such a world as there is. Nothing comes to pass by chance; nothing exists but what is produced by an active cause

behind it; and there is nothing which is not directed and overruled by the divine government in some way for good. Do we see sexual attractions and attachments, marriages, and thence families? This is natural, and as such is an ordinance of God, the Author of nature. Do we see people coming together in all sorts of associated relationship for all sorts of purposes? This is an outgrowth of man's social nature, ever working under such conditions as at any time exist. Hence the smallest group and the largest empire. Do we see physical strength, industry, business enterprise, wealth, intelligence, and religion taking on definite forms and developing manifold activities? They all have their origin in human nature; that is the fountain head of them all.

And now I ask, What is the aggregate product of these forces, activities, and their adjuncts? It is what we call *civilization*. And civilization, therefore, is the average advance of mankind in their social characteristics, from primal simplicity, crudeness, savageism, towards an ideal state of intelligence, refinement, virtue, and spiritual attainment. It is otherwise termed civil society, or, if you please, political society, when represented in the different tribes, states, and nations of the earth. Civil society localized, includes all the smaller bodies politic, associations, partnerships, families, individuals within its territorial limits, good, bad, and indifferent, whether they will or not. Man is a governmental being by nature, as well as a social, intellectual, religious, or otherwise endowed one. He has an instinct and

capacity for order, law, and ruling agencies of some sort, in all his associative operations. Hence government like marriage is an ordinance of God, because it is the legitimate outcome of the nature of man whereof God is the author. As the most imperfect type of married life is better than lawless commingling of the sexes, so the poorest of governments are better than no government at all.

But what is the specific function of civil government? It is to maintain and keep in order the average of civilization attained by general society at any given date or age, to repress outrage and misrule below that average, and to promote the improvement of its constituents so far as public opinion and common coöperation render this practicable. Further than this civil government cannot go, even though its officials and representatives at any time might desire to do so. Whatever is done to elevate and benefit mankind above and beyond the general level, must be done by individuals, outside associations, and divine providence, not by governmental action.

We come now to the subject of this discourse: The relation of Christ, his disciples and church, to the cardinal activities which pertain to civilization, to civil society, and especially to civil government. Does Primitive Christianity aim to abolish physical force? No; but by wise modifications to render it harmless and beneficent. Does it aim to abolish productive industry? No; but only to render it useful and conducive to the highest good of all men. Does it aim to abolish business enterprise, mechanical ingenuity, agriculture, manufac-

tures, commerce, etc.? No; but to render them fraternal, benevolent, and subservient to the general welfare. Does it aim to abolish property, wealth, worldly possessions? No; but only to conform their production, distribution, uses, and final disposal to the law of human brotherhood. Does it aim to abolish education, learning, literature, science, art, philosophy? No; but to purify and ennoble them, and make them in the highest degree useful to all classes and conditions of people. Does it aim to abolish natural religion or the common moralities of life? No; but to elevate and perfect them by higher divine revelations, inspirations, ethical principles, and practical virtues. Does it aim to abolish marriage, or the family relation, or voluntary association, or society at large, or civilization, or political government and institutions? No; but by all its spiritual and moralizing influences to regenerate them as fast as it can and improve them to the utmost of their respective capabilities. It is, in fine, to perfect them and thereby superinduce the highest possible moral order, social harmony, and fraternal good will throughout the earth, yea, in all spheres of human existence.

But how does Primitive Christianity propose to prosecute and fulfil this grand mission? Not by lowering itself to the moral level of society as it is, and of civil government under existing forms, with their multiform institutions and activities, while still barbarous, or semi-barbarous, crude, and at best radically wrong in important respects. This would be to falsify itself, apostatize from its high calling,

and defeat its professed design. It would thus become the mere concubine of the world and lose its power to carry it forward one step beyond its present defective religions and moral philosophies. The devotees of such religions and philosophies are content to subsist and fatten on the patronage of any government that can profit by their influence. Not so Primitive Christianity. It occupies vastly higher ground. It unfurls its banner on the mountain top, far above the tented field of the best civil government which has ever yet been set up on the earth. It proposes a far better order of social and civil life than has ever yet been actualized under heaven, even that divine order whose "officers shall be peace and its exactors righteousness," and under whose sway "violence shall no more be heard in the land, wasting nor destruction within its borders"; whose "walls shall be salvation and its gates praise." For it proclaims that law of perfect love which works no ill to any man, and compromises with nothing contrary to that law; it commands its disciples not to oppose evil with evil but to overcome it with good; and requires them to be "the salt of the earth" and "the light of the world;" the first-fruits of a radical and universal regeneration, and the pioneers of the human race to their destined holiness, harmony, and bliss.

But to be able to serve such a grand and glorious purpose as this, those enlisted for the work, Christ's true followers — in the aggregate, his church — must be mindful of two things: (1) Not to let the world ensnare, dismantle, and overpower them; and (2) not

to be themselves a detriment or hindrance to society at large or to civil government or to any other existing institutions in the prosecution of their own proper work on their own proper plane for the temporary good of mankind; agencies which mankind must have in an imperfect form until thoroughly converted to and established in the supreme excellence of Primitive Christianity. These are important and difficult tasks to perform; and it is no wonder that there have been such awkward attempts and pitiful failures in regard to them on the part of professsed Christians. It has been like sailing between Scylla and Charybdis; often a dash against one rock or the other; the church sometimes becoming the tool of the state by yielding tamely to its unjust and wicked exactions, and sometimes making the state its tool by invoking its sword to assist in furthering its interests and inaugurating the kingdom of God on the earth; now trying to revolutionize existing government by force of arms, and again to obtain possession of it by political intrigue and manœuvre. But primitive Christian morality was pre-eminently wise, holy, and promotive of human progress in this regard. Let us note its capital points:

(1) It recognized civil governments as natural, God-ordained, useful, and necessary *on their own plane;* therefore to be respected and not to be treated contemptuously nor violently resisted, even when oppressive, persecuting, and outrageously wicked in their administration. They were to be cheerfully obeyed when they were in the right, conformed to in all matters of morally indifferent detail

and usage, and submitted to without forcible rebellion in cases where their requirements contravened the divine law, and where conscience should therefore forbid obedience to them. In such cases Non-resistance should be practiced on two grounds of duty: (1) That the perfect law of love prompted and enjoined its application to governmental evil-doers as well as to individual offenders; and (2) That proper regard for the natural office and function of government demanded it. Hence Christ said "Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's," that is to worldly, civil government under all circumstances its due tribute of respect and peaceable submission; and "to God the things that are God's"; that is, all duties owed to Him — supreme homage and obedience. Thus Jesus, when called upon to pay customs to the Roman power, although he did not deem the demand wholly just, complied, in order to avoid offence against the established civil authority. Hence also Paul said, "Rulers are not a terror to good works but to the evil," that is, such is their natural and God-designed purpose. . "Wherefore ye must needs be subject not only for wrath, but for conscience' sake." "Render therefore to all their dues; tribute to whom tribute; custom to whom custom, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor."— *Rom.* xiii. 3, 5, 7. Furthermore the same apostle directs that "supplications, prayers, intercessions, giving of thanks be made for all men; for kings and all that are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty."— 1 *Tim.* ii. 1, 2. Again: "Put them in mind to be

subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work, to speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers but gentle, showing meekness to all men."— *Titus* iii. 1, 2. And Peter said: "Submit yourself unto every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake; whether it be to the king as supreme or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evil doers and for the praise of them that do well." "Honor all men, love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king."— 1 *Peter* ii. 13, 14, 17.

2. But there is another consideration to be noted in this connection. Civil governments in those early days were not Christian. They were notoriously anti-Christian, and the best of them were certain to be anti-Christian, more or less, for ages; as in fact they all are in important respects to this day. In their very nature it was and is impossible for them to be better than their average constituency; to act from higher principles than public sentiment for the time being will accept, sanction, and sustain. Hence, as governments are but the exponents and executors of public sentiment in the general society whose affairs they administer, they would naturally be the oppressors and persecutors of Christians so long as these were a despised and hated minority. Moreover, hostile religionists, philosophers, and the baser elements of general society would stimulate their political officials and leaders to oppression and persecution. In such cases the first thing likely to be done by those in authority would be to decree that the Christians should

abandon their religion, cease to teach it, and refrain from all efforts to extend its influence and power. Now if the primitive Christian doctrine had been "Obey civil governments implicitly and unqualifiedly, whatever they may require," then there would have been a speedy end of all Christian teaching, of the Christian conscience, and of Christianity itself; aye, and of all human progress thereby promoted. But Christ and his representatives provided against such a fatal issue. "Behold I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves," said he, "be ye therefore wise as serpents and harmless as doves. But beware of men; for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues. And ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my name's sake." "But when they persecute you in this city flee ye into another." "And fear not them which kill the body but are not able to kill the soul, but rather fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."—*Matt.* x. 16–18, 23, 28. When Peter and John were commanded by the Jewish rulers "not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus," their rejoinder was, "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye."—*Acts* iv. 18, 19. So throughout the New Testament we find this point of duty plainly prescribed:—to disobey government whereinsoever it required them to renounce, or violate, or compromise their religious principles, but always with unresisting, meek submission to whatever persecutions or penalties might be imposed upon them.

3. There is yet another important duty relative to civil government which Christian morality prescribes; and that is, not to invoke the aid of its military and penal power in any case whatsoever, nor assume any of its responsibility for resorts to injurious and deadly force. If Christians could consistently do this, their most central doctrine of perfect love and their primal virtue of abstaining from all resistance of evil with evil would be at once nullified and made void, and their morality would sink instantly to the level of that of Jewish rabbis and Pagan philosophers,—it would virtually disappear from among men. Then they would no longer "be the salt of the earth" and "the light of the world." Accordingly we find no precept in the New Testament instructing men to seek political office, prosecute cases of law, or call on the existing government to lend them penal or military assistance for any purpose, even to defend property, honor, or life. Nor do we find there a word of advice in regard to seeking governmental aid for the promotion of Christianity in the world. It is however evident from the nature of their religion, and from the example of the apostles, that if Christians were taken into custody by the civil magistrate or arraigned before the civil courts at the instigation of their enemies, they might rightfully plead their cause and claim all the privileges in the way of a fair trial and decent treatment that impartial justice would dictate. They could also innocently ask the governing authorities, by formal petition or otherwise, for any intervention or action on their part

not contrary to their own avowed Christian principles. They were, moreover, in no wise forbidden to serve the government in any capacity which required no sacrifice of principle and involved no personal responsibility for governmental resorts to deadly force or other unchristian practice. But there were few opportunities for such service in the early centuries of our era, and they are not numerous now. Christ himself eschewed on all occasions the functions, honors, and emoluments of civil office. He would not be a "judge or divider," even when solicited, nor allow himself before Pilate to be deemed an aspirant for any earthly throne. His apostles after his departure laid aside all ambition for temporal power. Some of them sought it for him and themselves early in their discipleship, but never after becoming fully imbued with his spirit, and fully conscious of their mission. Paul rebuked the Corinthian church sharply for resorting to litigation in the civil courts. "There is utterly a fault among you," he said, "because ye go to law one with another. Why do ye not rather endure wrong? Why do ye not suffer yourselves to be defrauded?"— 1 *Cor.* vi. 7.

Thus have I shown the relation in which Primitive Christianity teaches its true disciples to stand to civil governments, and the duty of non-participation in and disobedience to them, in cases involving a violation of Christian principles, and of peaceable submission to their wrongful exactions, persecutions, and judicial inflictions. I have also inferentially shown what the perfect Christian morality requires

of its professors in all their relations to worldly men; personal, domestic, social, political, civil, and governmental. And now I ask, what would be the character and influence of any one who should exemplify this morality in the several respects and to the extent indicated, as perfect love requires? And what would be the character and influence of a church composed of members who were true and faithful, in principle and practice, to that high standard of truth and duty? Would not such character and influence, even in the case of a single individual, be good, noble, heavenly? Would such an individual, or a church made up of such individuals retard human progress or hinder the work of civilizing and regenerating society and the world? Would they be a detriment to the government under which they might live? Would not persons of the moral and religious type I have indicated do quite as much good to a town, state, or nation, and at as little cost, as any equal number who should manipulate and manage party politics,— vote, hold office, execute legal penalties, and fight in and for the government? In the name of truth, justice, and common sense, I ask if they would not be the very best class of subjects which a town, state, or nation could have within its jurisdiction? These inquiries could receive only an affirmative answer from any reflecting, candid, rightly disposed individual. Yet there are many professing Christians as well as non-Christians who imagine that little or nothing can be done for human progress and the world's betterment except through the administra-

tive agencies of civil government; that the great work of purifying and elevating public opinion, the public conscience and morals, such as Christ and his Apostles wrought, is of very little account. They must put their particular party into possession of the governmental purse, sceptre, and sword, and then the right sort of laws would be enacted and enforced, and all who could be persuaded would be compelled to keep step to the music of the grand millennial march. With such, moral and religious forces avail little and Christian Non-resistance is what Henry Ward Beecher once contemptuously called it, "Christian nonsense." Nevertheless, I should be unworthy my acknowledged Lord and Master and faithless to my most solemn and sublime convictions of truth and duty, if I could be sneered or frightened out of my position.

Yet I presume not to deride, despise, or denounce those who are wedded to the existing civilistic and politico-military system of worldly government. If they honestly occupy that comparatively low moral plane and neither see nor aspire to anything higher, let them do the best they can for God and humanity with the machinery there at their command. But I wish it to be unmistakably understood that I regard the primitive Christian morality vastly superior to that exemplified by them, and claim that those who adopt it and live according to its requirements are the most advanced and the wisest leaders of mankind to their divinely ordained destiny. Yea, that such are the most effective promoters of all that is intrinsically good in general society and in

civil government as now administered; while at the same time they reach farthest forward towards that glorious consummation of the divine purpose which is the fulfilment of the Saviour's prayer, "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

DISCOURSE XV.

ON THE PRIMITIVE CHRISTIAN VIRTUE OF PERSONAL PURITY.

"That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within and defile the man."—*Mark* vii. 20–25.

"Dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."—2 *Cor.* vii. 1.

"As he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation."—1 *Peter* i. 15.

"Every man that hath this hope in him purifyeth himself."—1 *John* iii. 3.

There were religious and moral philosophies before the advent of Christ which inculcated the doctrine of Personal Purity and enjoined its practical exemplification upon their avowed adherents. In some respects his morality agreed with theirs on this subject; but in others it differed, bring less ascetic and reclusive but more spiritual. And my claim for its superiority and pre-eminence as a primitive Christian virtue or element of character is based upon this ground and not on the ground of its absolute originality and intrinsic difference from all other forms of the same thing. What then are we

to understand Personal Purity to be, as a part of the morality taught and required by Primitive Christianity? Purity is freedom from improper and foreign admixtures — from what defiles or contaminates any given substance. In morals it is freedom from evil accompaniments — from what is corrupt and vile, and Personal Purity is the freedom of the individual from unclean lusts, practices, habits,— from disorderly sensual desires and undue indulgence of the passions and appetites. In my analysis of the virtue under notice as related to human character and conduct, there are five distinct forms in which it finds expression, as there are five forms of impurity to be recognized and abjured. Let us consider these in a certain prescribed order, as follows: —

1. *Sexual impurity.* This includes adultery, fornication, and all kinds of lasciviousness or lewdness — all sorts of illicit and licentious intercourse between the male and female sexes. If I understand the New Testament Scriptures, Jesus and his apostles taught (1) that marriage between one man and one woman is natural, right, and honorable, in the ordinary course of human relationship; (2) that celibacy is wisest and best under such circumstances as render marriage overburdensome or for special reasons undesirable; (3) that all sexual intimacies of married persons with others than wife or husband are out of divine order and adulterous; (4) that persistent adultery is the only justifiable cause for divorce; (5) that the celibate or unmarried should abstain from all sexual cohabi-

tation, lascivious conduct, and incontinent abuses. In the early Christian days this code of sexual morality was regarded as over-strict and impracticable by the great mass of people who occupied the common plane of lustful indulgence in these matters, as it is still so regarded by such, even in Christendom. So is much of the primitive Christian requirement in other particulars, as I show elsewhere in this series of discourses. But it was given for the edification and observance of those who were the sincerely pledged followers of Christ as the pioneers in a new order of life on the earth and in the work of human regeneration; not for worldly-minded, sensual men of any sort — religionists, philosophers, and civilizers bearing any name who were willingly committed and bound to a lower standard of action. To their own masters they stand or fall. If they choose to follow other leaders than Christ, and be governed by other lawgivers, or by other rules or customs than those sanctioned by him, they are free to do so, but they must take the consequences. The so-called disciples of Christ, however, are bound to obey his injunctions and precepts in this as in other things, or they falsify their profession and act as traitors to him whom they avowedly serve. Yet it ought to be shown, as I think may be done, that even these are not required to do anything unreasonable or contrary to the highest good of themselves or others. *Is* there anything opposed to sound judgment, extravagant, or unbeneficent in this sexual morality of Christ, as I have defined and applied it? It is

indeed high, pure, far above and beyond the practice of the world at large, and difficult of attainment, requiring much self-discipline and restraint of the lower passions of human nature. What would it be worth if it were not so? Let us pursue this inquiry in detail.

Does not reason fortified by experience teach that marriage as a general rule is best for mankind, as founded in the instincts of human nature and as conducive to human virtue and happiness? Does it not teach that monogamatic marriage — the union of one man and one woman in connubial bonds — is more orderly, healthful, and joy-promoting than polygamy, or morganatic union, or complex wedlock of any kind? Does it not teach that adulterous sexual intimacies make the parties concerned less contented and happy than others, and that they render the condition of such less desirable on the whole than that of those not given to such practices? Does it not teach that unmarried persons lose rather than gain in body, mind, and spirit, by fornication, prostitution, self-pollution, sodomy, or any kind of unchaste, lascivious habits or practices? Alas, what wails of wretchedness, of despair even, come up from the millions of those who have suffered the bitter consequences of acting contrary to the requirements of the sexual morality of the primitive Gospel of Christ. But who ever suffered from scrupulous conformity to them, except it may have been some wholesome temporary self-denial which was afterwards recompensed by incalculable good?

But some persons will say the doctrine is good, but there are many who cannot practice it; who cannot control their animal passions and hold themselves under the required restraint. Perhaps; yet would they ask the heavenly Father to repeal or relax his holy laws? Would they have Christ grant them license for their lusts? And if such license were granted, or if God's laws were annulled, would they be permanently benefited thereby? They may have their own way, but, I repeat, they must take the results of doing so. "Experience keeps a dear school," but there are those who will learn in no other. It is sometimes a long and bitter course of tuition in this school that teaches some very simple lessons. Try it, ye who will, and, when you graduate, confess that Christ's school, with its yoke and burden, is the easier and the lighter.

Another may say that the preacher must not pass by that point of this morality which allows of but one cause for divorce, to wit: — sexual infidelity. That certainly is of doubtful validity. Answer: I know that in ancient times, and in modern times also, several other causes have been deemed sufficient to justify a dissolution of the marriage covenant. In the former a husband had power to put away his wife almost at his own pleasure. Even the Mosaic law granted large liberty of that sort. Christ knew this, but did not sanction it — did not deem it a proper rule for his followers and church. And he tells us why (See *Matt.* xix. 2–9). I know also that marriage is now widely regarded as merely or mainly a civil contract, sanctionable and

revocable by civil enactment. Let those who regard it in this light, deeming the statutes of men their supreme law, fix the matter to suit society as it is. Let them marry and unmarry after the fashion of the world for the time being and abide by the results. But let those professing to be Christians learn to marry and unmarry as their Master directs, and maintain the sanctity of the relationship in the spirit of his teachings. He did not regard marriage among his followers as a purely civil agreement, but as a divinely ordered religious covenant, to be entered into from holy motives, to be sacredly kept and never annulled except by the open, persistent, unrepentant marital infidelity of one or both the parties involved. Separations for just causes are not forbidden or condemned in the New Testament, but *divorce*, save for the one cause named, is disallowed.

But is it not hard, one may say, for the innocent party in case of separation to be denied the privilege of marrying again during the natural life-time of the guilty one? Very likely, in some cases. A great many wholesome duties are hard but are not to be ignored or evaded for that reason. I believe this to be a wholesome duty and one conducive of the highest good to humanity. If a Christian by some mistake has become entangled in a marriage which proves burdensome or intolerable, let it be endured with the best grace possible; but if it become too oppressive and odious to be further borne, let the sufferer nobly resolve not to attempt a second experiment of the same kind contrary to

his Master's injunction. As for those who choose to set Christ at naught and to act on a more accommodating moral plane, let them try what experiments in marriage and divorce they please and learn wisdom thereby. For my own part I have no doubt that the primitive doctrine of Christ upon this subject is the wisest and best for the permanent good of mankind, and the only one to be practiced by those who would be his faithful disciples.

2. *Gustatory Impurity*. This includes drunkenness, gluttony, and all excesses or abuses of the natural appetite for food and drink — intemperance of every kind and name and all abnormal stimulation of the physical system. I do not claim that Jesus and his immediate ministers taught total abstinence from all intoxicating beverages; for I do not believe any such claim can be sustained. Nor do I claim that they taught any specific system of dietetics, such as, before and since their time, have been prescribed by certain religionists and philosophers of worthy eminence. John the Baptist went far beyond Christ in the direction of regulating the use of meats and drinks. This is evident from the record. But we must not infer that the Master or his Apostles ever opposed or in any way disparaged Nazaritish simplicity or abstemiousness in respect to intoxicating beverages, dietetic indulgences, or physiological habits generally. They never did. Paul plainly inculcated the duty of abstinence from the use of meat which might cause others to stumble in the pathway of life. And this is the principle upon which Christians must adopt and urge

the pledge of total abstinence from all intoxicants. I cannot put it upon any other ground. I cannot honestly affirm that all such liquors are poisons *per se*; nor that they are under all circumstances injurious to the human system; nor that if used in strict moderation they would do serious harm. But I at the same time believe that their use is not necessary to the health and well-being of men, that they can be safely dispensed with, that under existing conditions the example of using them is a dangerous temptation to millions, and that, therefore, it is an imperative Christian duty to abjure them as beverages altogether.

But why, it may be asked, did not Christ and the evangelists take that ground? Because it was in their day unnecessary, and because their principles involved the duty of taking it, whenever, in the experience of mankind, it should become necessary. The distillation of alcohol was then unknown, and I deem it safe to affirm that in the present age, under existing forms of civil and social life, the facilities and enticements to an excessive use or gross abuse of intoxicants have multiplied ten, fifty, or a hundred fold. Hence sobriety and temperance cannot be maintained in the face of these manifold temptations, without the stringent application of the rule of total abstinence from all that can intoxicate. Nor can I doubt that were Christ now in the flesh, his own cardinal principles of truth and duty would require him to adopt this rule.

But notwithstanding the different state of things in their times, the testimonies of Christ and his

followers were stern and uncompromising against drunkenness, gluttony, and all sorts of revelry. Jesus himself, in describing the moral degradation of the prodigal son, represents him as having "wasted his substance in riotous living." And the faithless servant at his coming was one who "ate and drank with the drunken." Paul said, "Let us walk honestly as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, etc. But put on ye the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh to fulfill the lusts thereof." — *Rom.* xii. 12–14. And Peter; "The time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revelings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries." — 1 *Peter* iv. 3. Let these testimonies from the Scriptures suffice.

3. *Conversational Impurity.* This includes all manner of obscene and filthy language, unchaste suggestions, libidinous inuendo, or other forms of dissolute speech, whereby lewd and sensual practices are incited and encouraged. "O generation of vipers," cried the Master, "how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." "For every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account at the day of judgement. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned." — *Matt.* xii. 34, 36. 37. Paul said, "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good for the use of edifying, that it may minister good to the hearers."

"Neither filthiness nor foolish talking nor jesting." "And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them." — *Eph.* iv. 29; v. 4, 11. And James: "If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body." "The tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity; so is the tongue among our members that it defileth the whole body and setteth on fire the course of nature, and it is set on fire of hell." "Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be." —*James* iii. 2, 6, 10. These extracts will suffice under this head.

4. *Passional Impurity.* This includes all indulgences of excessive passion, inordinate affection, and highly excited, irrational feeling. It may consist in cherishing desires and lusts which are evil in themselves, or affections and emotions essentially good but unduly exercised and out of divine order as to time, place, or degree. Primitive Christianity takes cognizance of sins not only outwardly committed, but, in their inception or inward beginning, as germs of wickedness in the heart. An unhallowed picture of wrong appears before the imagination; gazing upon it in thought, especially upon its attractive features, a desire to commit it is awakened, which, being fondled and nourished, wins the approval of the will, and that in turn determines the course of sinful action to be pursued in the case. The sin is committed in desire and purpose before it becomes an accomplished fact — an overt act amenable to open rebuke and condemnation.

Has not this been the mode of procedure with all of us in our conscious wrongful deeds?

But a great many vices never ultimate in outward acts, for want of opportunity or because repressed by circumstances. Yet, if they have an abiding place in cherished desire, and are hospitably entertained by the thought and will, they are no less vices than if allowed to assume external form. They are as real; I do not say as heinous or injurious. And we, therefore, should be thankful when lack of opportunity or repressive circumstances prevent us from committing them in actual word or deed. But let us not deem ourselves innocent and free from condemnation at the bar of righteous judgment in such cases; for we are verily guilty in so far as we have voluntarily cherished the desire, the thought, the will, to do the evil thing, though such thought, desire, or will was never actualized. Nor must we deem ourselves cured of the evil, free from blame, and out of danger from it, until we have deeply repented of it, and thoroughly overcome it. What we cannot innocently consummate in external action, we cannot innocently contemplate, purpose, or desire. We must silence and be wholly rid of the thing within before we can be exempt from condemnation at the judgment seat of Christ. This is the plain teaching of the Gospel, as my texts indicate, and it is philosophically sound doctrine.

Let us consider then that it is a most laudable ambition and a great attainment to be pure in heart — in affection, in imagination, in will, and in the exer-

cise of every emotion resident within us. And let us not forget that, to be blameless and undefiled in word and deed, we must strive especially to be so within; that vice, crime, sin must be nipped in the intentions and inclinations that govern us; that we must commence the work of ridding ourselves of evil and its consequences at the very beginning in our own breasts if we would succeed in accomplishing the end in view. We may not wholly prevent thoughts of evil coming to us, or wrong desires springing up within, but we can refuse to give them hospitable welcome and to harbor them as acceptable guests, and thus nourish them till they gain supremacy over us. Taken early and firmly in hand, they can be held in check and sooner or later completely overcome, enabling us to realize the full meaning of the beatitude: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

5. *Spiritual Impurity.* This is the most subtle and dangerous of the foes to man's highest well-being of which this discourse treats. It relates to and includes the most interior and intangible principles and passions of the soul perverted and turned from their proper objects, thus working most serious mischief and misery. "A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit." — *Matt.* vii. 18. "Unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled." — *Titus* i. 15. The other kinds of impurity named are deplorable enough, but spiritual impurity most so of all. And for the reason that it lies back of

and beneath the others in the remote recesses of the nature of man, and is constantly sending forth a subtle, debasing influence, almost imperceptible but potent for harm to the character and life. We all have some deep ruling loves, motives, or principles lying back of all sensation, almost back of our consciousness. If these be good and pure we can be reformed of many wrong habits or practices with tolerable facility, and our growth in grace will be correspondingly easy and rapid; but if they are corrupt and vile all moral and spiritual vitality is in jeopardy; there is necessarily in us an essential lack of moral principle, stamina, and integrity, as there is of spiritual healthfulness and vigor. Let me illustrate what I mean. Here is a man intellectually capable, brilliant perhaps, but with a poor or perverted conscience. His predominating motives and impulses in the last analysis are animal and selfish, yet he wears an appearance of respectability; is possibly a successful, even a religious hypocrite. He is governed by such considerations as are formulated in the following apothegms: There is no such thing as unconditioned right and wrong; as absolute personal responsibility; and no higher law than prudential expediency. Prevailing custom, public opinion, the civil statute-book, embody the highest rules of human conduct. The appetites, passions, and propensities of human nature must be allowed large liberty; must be gratified more or less at pleasure, regardless of what are called moral laws. Whatever can be done secretly or openly for self-gratification is allowable, and the

business of no one but the person or persons involved. We are necessitated to act as we do and cannot act otherwise. What we have the power to do, we have the right to do; "might makes right." "The end sanctifies the means." Success is the test of truth and duty, and must be honored accordingly. All mankind are at heart selfish, and no one person is better than another. He is the wisest man who looks out best for himself, in this world. What one thinks, purposes, does, by himself, cannot be sinful, so long as he does not express or act it to another's harm. What are called crimes or sins are sometimes necessary, and therefore, in such cases, justifiable. In fact there is no such thing as absolute truth, or intrinsic, unconditioned morality.

Now all these and kindred opinions, notions, tenets, or ideas are seldom entertained by any one person. But suppose they were substantially held by the man in question, and were by him allowed to mold and actuate his character and life. Do you not see that there would be in him a fatal lack of moral principle, steadfastness, and honor, as there would of true spiritual vitality and healthfulness? If by heredity, education, or surrounding circumstances he chanced to be a decent fellow, what could be done with him or for him but to let him go his own way, and work out his destiny on his own lines, only to find himself in fatal error at the last. And if he by falling into evil courses should need radical reformation, what moral appeals could avail anything which did not reach and reverse

his controlling ideas, motives, and principles — which did not renovate him in the inmost recesses of his soul?

I conclude this discourse by saying that Primitive Christianity deprecates and prohibits the different kinds of corruption enumerated, and enjoins its disciples to strive after Christlike purity in all things. Its morality in this matter is to me not only supremely rational and attractive, but pre-eminently calculated to promote order, virtue, spirituality, and happiness among men. Wherefore let us heed the apostolic exhortation, "Be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity."— 1 *Tim.* iv. 12. "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world. Jesus Christ having given himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity and purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works."— *Titus* ii. 11-14.

DISCOURSE XVI.

ON THE PRIMITIVE CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE CONCERNING OATH-TAKING.

"Ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time; Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths. But I say unto you, Swear not at all.' — *Matt.* v. 33, 34.

"But above all things, my brethren, swear not; neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath; but let your yea be yea, and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation." — *James* v. 12.

These passages inculcate a special duty of primitive Christian morality — abstinence from oath-taking, in all its manifold forms. Christ seems not to have originated this virtue. It was taught and practiced by the Essenes, one of the several Jewish sects; and perhaps by some other moralists of the olden time, though I am not certain on this point. But no matter. Christ made it a part of his moral code by adoption and unqualified sanction, and it becomes his disciples to pay it respectful obedience. In discussing the reasonableness and wisdom of this prohibition, let us inquire, what is an oath? What is its alleged use? How did it originate? Did Christ prohibit all oath-taking among his disciples? And if so, why?

1. What is an oath? In answering this question we must carefully distinguish between the essential characteristic of an oath and the several concomitants necessarily involved or implied in it; for these may exist without any oath, but no oath without them. There can be no oath without a person or persons to take it; without some other officially authorized person or persons to recognize it; without an occasion for the administration of it; without some solemn, obligatory declaration or promise being made; without some implied doubt of the general truthfulness or veracity of the party or parties taking the oath; without some real or supposed judicial and retributive power appealed or referred to in the form of adjuration used; nor without some fearful calamity, curse, or punishment invoked or imprecated as a penalty for violating the given promise or declaration. This last specification alone embodies the essentially distinctive characteristic of an oath. The other named requisites or concomitants of an oath may exist, but without the last there is only a simple assertion or pledge of obligation, not an oath. That, in fact, constitutes the oath.

The essential oath then consists in an imprecation from some retributive power of a fearful calamity, curse, or punishment, to be inflicted on the person or persons making a specified declaration or promise, if such declaration or promise prove false or contrary to the truth. The retributive power invoked in any case may be God, the gods, nature, angels, spirits, or men in authority, and the penalty, curse, or

calamity impending, must be deemed fearful enough to overcome all temptations or inducements to prevarication or falsehood. The form of imprecation employed in the customary judicial oath is, "So help me God"; which, as interpreted by the highest legal tribunals, means, "May God withdraw all favor from me and consign me to the doom of an utter reprobate, if I testify or promise falsely in the matter under consideration"; in other words "I stake all my hopes of divine mercy, grace, and salvation upon my truthfulness in the present case." Multitudes of people are ignorant of the real significance of the invocation, "So help me God"; supposing it to mean simply "May God help me to be truthful in what I say," which would seem to be correct from a superficial thought of the subject, and by simply regarding the form of words employed. But any intelligent jurist will inform them of their error — will tell them that the innocent-looking phrase is a most fearful imprecation of divine vengeance — the calling on God for utter and everlasting condemnation, if "the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth" be not spoken. Such is the meaning given to the phrase in question by the united jurisprudence of Christendom, and the eminent moral philosopher, Dr. Francis Wayland, formerly of Brown University, says that its purpose is "to imprecate upon ourselves the absence of the favor of God, and, of course, all possible misery forever." Nevertheless, the prescribed oath in any given case is so much a matter of form, and is administered both by the courts and by the ordi-

nary magistrate in such an off-hand, frivolous manner, that few who take it stop to consider whether or not it is anything more than a legal technicality, to be observed because prescribed in the statute, but to be gone through with as speedily and indifferently as possible. It ought not to be so, but so it is in practical life.

Oaths are generally classed as judicial, extra-judicial, and profane. Those prescribed by civil governments are called judicial. Those administered under the authority of voluntary associations, secret societies, and by individuals in private life, are termed extra-judicial. While common oaths, those used more or less thoughtlessly and recklessly in the ordinary intercourse of life; as heard in the street, saloon, office, or elsewhere among the vulgar and irreverent, are designated as profane. But all kinds of oaths agree in the one distinctive characteristic, implied or involved — the imprecation of some harm, curse, calamity, or vengeance upon the person or persons to whom the oath applies or is related. For this reason especially, as well as for others to be enumerated, they are condemned and prohibited by the pure morality of the Gospel of Christ.

How then is it, the question may be asked, with what is termed the affirmation — a substitute for the oath often used by persons of conscientious scruples regarding the matter. This first came into vogue by enactment of the English Parliament under William III. in 1796, as a concession to the rising religious party termed Friends or Quakers, who

absolutely refused to take an oath for conscience' sake, and who suffered many disabilities and wrongs and much persecution on that account. They were quite willing to acknowledge submission to the civil government of their country, but nothing would induce them to *swear* allegiance to it or to take any other form of oath. It was finally proposed that they should make a simple affirmation, subject to "the pains and penalties of perjury," in cases where the oath was administered to other people. To this proposition they gave their assent, and an act of Parliament was passed accordingly. In our country any one having a conscience against the oath may make affirmation instead, the favor not being restricted to Friends alone. Personally, I always insist on this privilege. The affirmation is not free from objections, but it is in no proper sense an oath, and is far preferable to it. It imprecates no divine wrath or vengeance upon one guilty of untruthfulness, though it acknowledges the rightfulness of heavy legal penalties for that offence, and of course, liability to suffer them if the offence be committed. There is a kind of absurdity, however, in formally requiring this acknowledgment as a substitute for the customary imprecation, inasmuch as all governments claim and exercise the prerogative of inflicting punishment in such cases, and Christians are bound by their religion to render them peaceful submission in this as in other respects. The time is coming, no doubt, when the governments of all civilized nations will be wise and humane enough to lay aside all such lumbering

forms as oaths and affirmations, and simply hold their subjects penally responsible for false declarations and promises, according to the nature and aggravation of the offence. But that era of reason and common sense is yet far away in the future. Meantime the affirmation can be taken by those resolved to be obedient to their confessed Master in this matter, as a form essentially free from the abominations of an oath.

2. What is the alleged use, object, or design of an oath? This requires but a brief answer; viz.:— to secure truthfulness in cases of serious importance — veracity in giving testimony or making declaration, and fidelity in the fulfilment of promises, engagements, and obligations. From the earliest times and as incidental to a morally low order of individual and social life, fear has been deemed the most powerful motive which could be brought to bear upon human nature for the purpose of gaining desirable results, and especially the fear of God, of supernatural beings, or of vengeance in some form from the invisible world. Next to these objects of fear, the calamities of physical nature, the visitations of misfortune, and the inflictions of powerful men — rulers, magistrates, etc.— invested with the assumed right to destroy life, have been employed to awaken the same sentiment in the human breast. The oath is based on such sentiment — on superstitions and semi-barbarous fears. It is the product of superstition and barbarism. Where these have been outgrown its usefulness ceases; it is either trifled with or conformed to from mere custom, or

abhorred as pernicious. It was for long ages assumed, and perhaps still is by many people, that maledictions and punishments, solemnly invoked in confirmation of one's truthfulness, not only impend over the guilty but are quite likely to be inflicted, sooner or later. Therefore the more fearful the evil imprecated, the stronger the assurance of the imprecator's sincerity and trustworthiness. The more fearful the oath, the more reliable the witness; the harder the swearing, the more credible the testimony. Consequently no one was to be trusted where anything of importance was at stake without an oath. It is no wonder under these circumstances that oaths were multiplied indefinitely, till used in every pettifogging law-suit and to qualify the lowest public functionaries. No wonder that so many generations of mongrel Christians have believed that for a man to pledge all his hopes of God's favor in time and eternity and to imprecate on himself everlasting damnation if guilty, was the most perfect guaranty of his honesty and truthfulness! Alas for human folly and superstition!

3. The origin of oaths. They antedate all history and all known development of civilization, even the rudest. They were invented by none of the famous legislators whose names have come down from remote antiquity; all of whom found them in use among men and merely accepted them as indispensable, with such modifications as they deemed it wise to make. We can trace them to prehistoric times and may with probability conjecture that they are coeval with the oldest superstitions of our race.

As soon as men began to believe in terrible, avenging, supernatural powers, they might naturally invent the oath as a warrant for truthfulness. But precisely how this was we have no certain knowledge, but must be content to presume that the oath originated as indicated, in the twilight of human history, whence it gradually came into the usage of succeeding generations and of all nations.

4. Why did Christ prohibit the use of the oath among his disciples? No reasons are given but we can deduce them with tolerably certainty from the fundamental principles of his Gospel. In the nature of things, oaths are repugnant to the genius of Christianity, which proclaims God a Father, man a brother, and the supremacy of a love that blesses and curses not. Under such conceptions oath-taking must be regarded as objectionable and wrong: (1) Because it is a slavish superstition, based on irrational fear and imaginary divine cruelty. (2) Because it is presumptuous in man to prescribe vengeful punishment for his own sins or those of his fellow-men. He does not know the nature or amount of punishment requisite in any given case. It is, therefore, reprehensibly rash and arrogant for him to prejudge and solicit retribution — above all divine vengeance — for offences against the moral law. Yet oath-taking involves such unwarrantable assumption of judicial wisdom — a prerogative belonging to God alone. (3) Because it is irreverent and impious towards God to call on Him to visit with outpourings of indignation and wrath any wrong-doers or violators of His holy law; implying thereby that

he will not judge righteously and execute punishment impartially in the administration of His divine government. The oath presupposes that He can and will be advised and directed in certain contingencies by the imploration of human ignorance, folly, and superstition. The absurdity of such proceeding is as glaring as it is impious. (4) Because oath-taking makes truthfulness on special occasions and upon particular matters all-important, but truthfulness as a primary and universal virtue of very little account. When under oath men must be truthful because the most solemn and awful imprecations are hanging over them. But when not under oath they may lie and deceive with comparative impunity; at least with little apprehension of divine condemnation, as none has been formally invoked. This is virtually setting at naught the sacred obligation to speak the truth at all times, and playing fast and loose with moral principle. It is adopting a slip-shod morality, hostile to the genius of the religion of Christ. Under that religion, every "yea" and "nay" must be as sacredly kept as an oath. (5) Because oath-taking, although it may insure greater veracity and credibility among the ignorant and unprincipled, tends to corrupt the public conscience and to vitiate the sense of obligation always to speak the truth among the masses of mankind. If men are to put under oath in order to be believed, who is likely to be truthful otherwise? Or whose word is to be trusted if he who utters it be not sworn? Oath-taking always did and always will educate men to be unscrupu-

lous in common life, and weaken confidence in the ordinary utterances and statements of human intercourse and acquaintanceship. Whereas, according to the teaching and spirit of Christ, one's word should forever be as reliable as his oath or bond. (6) The oath, while often a sham and an offence to the honest and upright, becomes "sheep's clothing" or a "scape-goat" to the unscrupulous and hypocritical — a mere spider's web. How many timid, inexperienced witnesses have been disconcerted, confused, and broken down by a skilful manipulation of its terrors! How many brazen charlatans have imposed their falsehoods upon a court under its sanction, defeated justice, and defrauded the innocent of their rightful dues! How many honest, conscientious people have lost what justly belonged to them because they would not swear at all or swear falsely! How many self-seeking, unprincipled men have been sworn into office the duties of which they never intended to perform! The more unscrupulous a man is, the more ready is he to swear to anything for his own gain. Those familiar with judicial office-holding, and revenue collecting affairs will tell you how little reliance can be placed upon oaths. Experienced men of sound judgment seeking the ends of justice in any case rely far more upon the substantial and known credibility of a witness or promiser than upon his formal oath. (7) Because oath-taking, as maintained by law, leads to profane swearing and the manifold abuses and improprieties connected therewith. If men may invoke God's wrath and curse in stately form

on solemn occasions, why not in everyday life and in the common intercourse of man with man? So it seems to have been with the Jews in Christ's time. Their profanities were numerous. They swore by heaven, by the earth, by the temple, by the altar, and some by their own heads. Moreover, Rabbinical casuistry could create nice distinctions and subtle evasions whereby the crafty could pretend to make oath to anything while being in fact bound to nothing. That oath-taking in one form or another was a prevailing habit in the early Christian days may be inferred from the fact that Peter, though called to be an apostle, in his confusion and agitation caused by the repeated charge of companionship with the accused Jesus, "denied it with an oath" and "began to curse and to swear, saying, 'I know not the man.'" For these seven and kindred reasons which I need not pause to specify, it is obvious that such a Christ and such a Christianity as we have portrayed in the New Testament, must, in the very nature of things, morally considered, be utterly opposed to oath-taking, and in principle and spirit, as well as in verbal form, must have put it under perpetual and unqualified prohibition.

5. But did Jesus intend to forbid *all* oath-taking in his teaching upon the subject? Without doubt. His language is inclusive and sweeping, making no exceptions and admitting of none. Take note of it. "Swear not *at all*; neither by heaven, for it is God's throne; nor by the earth, for it is his footstool; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great

king; neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black." And James, reiterating the injunction, adds; "Neither by any other oath," showing how universal and absolute were the Saviour's words, as he, one of his chosen teachers, understood them. Yet some have childishly pleaded that Christ could not have included sacred and judicial oaths, such as Moses sanctioned and civil governments prescribe, but only false, profane swearing. The groundlessness of their plea is made apparent by noticing his mode of introducing the subject. "Ye have heard that it hath been said by them of olden time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths; but I say unto you, Swear not at all." He refers to sacred and judicial oath-taking as approved and practiced by Moses and the ancient law-givers only to condemn and utterly prohibit it, teaching a higher morality, that of not swearing at all. They forbade false-swearing and common profanity; he everything of the nature of an oath. He was not simply repeating and emphasizing their requirement, but proclaiming a more exalted and comprehensive one, as his language plainly proves; to wit: abstinence from oath-taking of every kind and name. What confuses many people is the difficulty of applying this prohibition to the affairs of civil government as now constituted. The difficulty will disappear as civil governments become Christianized — rise to the moral plane of the Sermon on the Mount. On a lower plane their action in this as in other respects will

be controlled by maxims, customs, and principles more or less antagonistic, or at least inferior to those derived from the New Testament. But professed followers of Jesus — those taking him for their leader are under sacred obligation to observe and obey in consistent loyalty the precept, "Swear not at all." Civil society and organized governments will attain to the same high standard at some future date and stage of progress.

Another groundless plea in opposition to this sweeping interpretation and application of the Saviour's teaching upon this matter is that he himself took a judicial oath when brought before Caiaphas the high priest and adjured by that functionary to tell whether or not "he was the Christ, the son of God." To that adjuration he replied, "Thou hast said," the equivalent of an affirmative answer. Now granting that the question forced upon Jesus was in the form of an oath, the answer he gave in no wise implicated him. He was not in the least degree responsible for what Caiaphas said. He had put a question in his own way. He imposed no oath upon the accused. He exacted from him no appeal to God, no imprecations of divine wrath in any contingency. He asked his question in the most imperative manner known to him. Jesus answered in a calm, dignified spirit, as became him, virtually declaring the truth and representing himself to the high priest and his accusers in his true light, without evasion, prevarication, or fear, though he knew that death awaited his reply. His action and bearing were in keeping

with his whole sublime character, and furnish not the slightest warrant for assuming that there was in his mind any exception to his general sweeping prohibition of oath-taking.

Such then is the morality of Primitive Christianity in relation to the subject discussed in the present discourse. The doctrine inculcated is to my mind pure, elevated, and surpassingly admirable, and I am amazed at the fact in religious history that, since the days of Constantine in the fourth century, only little groups of professed Christians scattered here and there through many lands have been true to it. Nevertheless, I feel sure that the number of learned and exemplary men and women, as well as of those less learned though equally exemplary, who have acknowledged and reverenced this Gospel requirement, has been slowly increasing for the last three hundred years and must go on increasing until the odious, unchristian practice shall be numbered with manifold other products of ignorance, superstition, and barbarism which have no longer a place among the established habits, customs, and institutions of civilized man. Meanwhile let those who have risen to a just conception of the primitive Christian doctrine touching the matter in review and are resolved to follow the Master whithersoever he may lead them, as sincere disciples, be faithful to their light with an unwavering assurance that "truth is mighty and will prevail."

Shall we who bear the Christian name
And vows of love and fealty make,
Without disquietude or shame
Presume an oath to give or take?

Behold in every Christian land,
Barbaric customs still abound;
Still set at naught is Christ's command,
With odious oaths the airs resound.

May we no baneful flood augment,
Nor help to swell corruption's tide;
But, with a loyalty intent,
Be faithful to our heavenly guide.

DISCOURSE XVII.

ON THE PRIMITIVE CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE CONCERNING PROPERTY.

"But seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you."—*Matt.* vi. 33.

The design of this discourse is to present a clear and truthful exposition of the primitive Christian morality in respect to property — its acquisition, use, and disposal, in the rightful ordering of human life upon the earth. On this point the teachings of Christ and his apostles have been very imperfectly understood. The doctrine embodied in them is peculiar and peculiarly excellent, as I propose to show. As with other themes discussed by me, so with this; we will begin at the foundation.

First, then, what is property? We all have a general idea of what it is, but let us be definite and accurate in replying to this question. The word property has various meanings. In the present investigation, however, it is to be used exclusively in its pecuniary or monetary sense, as representing whatever is subject to ownership — as possessing an appreciable, transferable, marketable value. In this sense anything and everything having monetary worth and capable of being exchanged for an

assumed equivalent — anything and everything that can be bought, sold, loaned, given, taken, and made serviceable to the necessity, comfort, or enjoyment of mankind, is property. It may belong to any one of the great kingdoms of material nature; it may belong to one person exclusively, or jointly to two or more persons, or it may be held in common for the use and benefit of any considerable number of persons, however associated. I need not be more specific; the definition given being sufficiently explicit and comprehensive for the purpose now in view.

In what does the intrinsic and absolute value of property consist? Obviously in its ability to produce, procure, or furnish some substantial good; some wholesome, innocent satisfaction and pleasure to the body, mind, or heart of man. One might own all the world but if he could derive no real benefit from it and get no happiness out of it, it would be of no worth to him; perhaps an intolerable burden. Or, if he so misused or abused it as to render it a bane rather than a blessing to himself and others, its possession would be worse than worthless — a positive nuisance or curse.

And now having stated what property is and in what its absolute value consists, we will inquire how Christ regarded its ownership and use, and what directions he gave or the principles of his religion suggest and require in respect to its accumulation and distribution. Did he ignore the subject of property as something with which he and his religion had nothing to do, leaving his disciples to

act in reference to it as seemed to them best? Certainly not; for his precepts concerning it were neither few nor indefinite. Did he assume that there was no such thing as property, as some reformers have taught, and no rights of ownership, individual or combined? By no means; for he told the young man coming to him for instruction concerning the eternal life what to do with his great possessions. Did he denounce all property as evil or unnecessary? No; for he said "Your heavenly Father knoweth ye have need of these things"—food, raiment, and such-like articles of common use belonging to the category of property. He, without doubt, recognized the fact of property and the right of holding it, but put it, in his plan of human life, under strict supervision and regulation. He used intensive forms of speech concerning this, as concerning other subjects, which are to be interpreted and applied as reason and common sense dictate and in the light of his general teaching and example. The passage in King James' version of the New Testament, "Take no thought for your life," etc., by a more rational, if not a more literal rendering, reads, "Be not over-anxious for your life," etc. The precept condemns distrustful, feverish solicitude and fear, not calm, rational forethought and wise provision for coming needs. The young man referred to, inquiring the way of the eternal life, was told that if he would be perfect he must sell what he had and give to the poor. But this was only a special case and the requirement was the touch-stone of the young man's selfishness — for

this was his prevailing sin — and was never designed to be the universal rule for those seeking to follow Christ in all sincerity and faithfulness. It is nowhere else enjoined in all the Scripture record, though a generous, large-hearted liberality and relief of the poor and needy are enjoined repeatedly, and made of essential importance. That Jesus did not intend to be understood as teaching the universal duty of using one's entire possessions for the good and happiness of mankind, and was not so understood by his associates, is plainly shown by the fact that several of those associates — Peter, Matthew, and John especially — had homes of their own and without doubt the usual appurtenances of domestic life, with possibly other property; deeming themselves in no wise untrue to their Lord on that account and receiving no rebuke from him therefor. No. The intensive forms of speech often used by Jesus and other Scripture personages are not to be strained to their utmost and taken in their baldest, most literal sense, but are to be construed and understood, I repeat, by the reason and common sense of thoughtful men and women, in harmony with the essential spirit and principles of the Gospel as contained in the general teachings and exemplified in the life of the Founder of the Christian faith. Otherwise we make nonsense of some of the sublimest doctrines of Christianity and fall into confusion and serious error concerning what is most vital to our holy religion and to the well-being and happiness of mankind. And in the matter before us, let us remember that we can give all we have, including

ourselves, for the good of humanity, in ways that shall enlighten, reform, elevate, and save them, without impoverishing ourselves and depriving ourselves of the means of further helpfulness in the world.

That Christ and his apostles never questioned the rightfulness of owning, managing, and disposing of property, is further attested by the fact that all their precepts regarding the use of worldly possessions pre-suppose such rightfulness. Moreover, their injunctions against covetousness and mammon-worship, and their exhortations to charity and liberal giving, necessarily imply the same thing. In that palmy day of brotherly love when the disciples "had all things in common," the treasury was supplied by individuals selling what they pleased of their belongings and contributing the whole or part of the proceeds as they deemed best. Whatever was so collected was not given, nor was it asked, on the ground that those in possession of it had no right to it, or that it was a sin to retain it. Ananias and Sapphira were not condemned for keeping back a part of their property, but for lying about it. Peter plainly said to them, "While it remained, was it not thine own, and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power?"

Again: Did Christ and his apostles ever prescribe how and by whom property should be owned and managed; whether by individuals, by joint tenants, or by tenants in common? Never; but wisely left the matter to the judgment and choice of each and every individual owner of property to the end of time, as a question of prudential expediency, not

of absolute moral principle. For some people it may be best for themselves and for humanity to be individual proprietors; for others, joint partners; for others, co-operative share-holders; and for still others, proprietors in common or communistic owners. I am a decided Associationist, not because of any arbitrary moral obligation or necessity impelling thereto, not because there is any natural or moral wrong in individual ownership, but on grounds of wise expediency for those prepared for it, as a means of elevating humanity and bringing in the kingdom of heaven.

What then is the primitive Christian morality in its relation to property? As taught by Christ it is

1. That all property, being supplied to mankind originally by divine Providence, should be subject to the divine law — the supreme moral law of justice, charity, and brotherhood.

2. That property must never be worshiped, idolized, or allowed to stand first in human esteem as preferable to God, man, or duty. It must not be desired, acquired, used, or disposed of, contrary to the divine moral law.

3. That property must not be deemed precious *per se*, or valued merely for its own sake, but solely for the good uses to which it may be devoted — for what it may be the means of doing to satisfy the necessities and promote the improvement, comfort, and happiness of the human race.

4. That all property must be deemed consecrated to innocent, lawful, and beneficent purposes, according to the highest light of those in possession of

it, and used for such purposes judiciously and ungrudgingly.

5. That the mere possession of property, however innocently acquired, confers no right to expend or appropriate it contrary to the perfect law of justice and love; that is, for any improper, wrong, or evil purpose.

6. That great riches are morally dangerous to those possessing them and oppressive to the poorer classes; and that the voluntary avoidance of excessive wealth by donation, in the spirit of self-sacrifice for the advancement of any holy cause, the doing of any philanthropic work, or the prosecution of any enterprise which a sense of duty suggests, is pre-eminently advisable and praiseworthy.

These propositions seem to me plainly deducible from the following and other testimonies of New Testament Scriptures, viz.: "No man can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other or he will hold to the one and despise the other, Ye cannot serve God and mammon." "Therefore be not over-anxious saying, What shall we eat or what shall we drink, or wherewith shall we be clothed? For after all these things do the Gentiles seek; for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." — *Matt.* vi. 24, 31–33. "Take heed and beware of covetousness; for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things that he possesseth." "Sell that ye have and give alms. Provide yourselves bags

which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not; where no thief approacheth nor moth corrupteth. For where your treasure is there will your heart be also." — *Luke* xii. 15, 33, 34. See also in the same chapter, the parable of the rich man who pulled down his barns and builded greater, and who then said to his soul, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease; eat, drink and be merry. But God said unto him, Fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee; then whose shall these things be which thou hast provided? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself and is not rich towards God." — *Verses* 16–21. "Charge them that are rich in this world that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who giveth us all richly to enjoy; that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life." "For we brought nothing into this world and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us therewith be content. But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil, which, while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith and pierced themselves through with many sorrows." — 1 *Tim.* vi. 17–19, 7–10. "Let your conversation be without covetousness, and be content with such things as

ye have; for he hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper and I will not fear what man shall do unto me." — *Heb.* xiii. 5, 6. "Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive." — *Acts* xx. 35. "Who though he was rich, yet for your sakes became poor, that ye through his poverty might be made rich." — 2 *Cor.* viii. 9. "Whoso hath this world's good and seeth his brother have need and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? Let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth." — 1 *John* iii. 17, 18. These quotations will suffice.

If there can be any higher, holier, or more rational morality relative to property than this, I know not where to look for it. And I am sure that the blessed experiences of the few in all ages of our era who have practiced it, as well as the bitter experiences of the many who have contemned it, must rise up to confess and attest its excellence. Who then are disposed to make it their own by adoption and exemplification? To enlighten and aid all such let me still further expound the principles involved by specifying the just, necessary, and Christian uses to which property may be put, in conformity with the spirit of what has been said.

1. To supply the natural need of wholesome food or nutriment — just what in kind, quality, variety, and quantity, is really healthful and promotive of the well-being of the physical body.

2. To supply the natural need of clothing or raiment, of just the kind, quality, and amount requisite to health, comfort, and modest comeliness — nothing less and nothing more.

3. To supply the natural need of a healthful, comfortable, pleasant home — housing, lodging, with accompanying appliances and appurtenances.

4. To supply necessary, wholesome, productive employment for one's self and dependents; whereby suitable business may be carried on or work furnished according to capacity and opportunity. This, all who live by honest industry must have; either by their own providing or at the hands of employers. Enough of the right kind of employment should be available but not so much as to impose slavish burdens upon any, whether or not disposed to bear them.

5. To supply all the really necessary healthful and proper pecuniary means of supporting, rearing, educating, and satisfying the essential wants of a family. A reasonable sufficiency without extravagance or excess in any particular.

6. To supply all real need of rest, recreation, and amusement; also maintenance in case of debility, infirmity, or advancing age.

7. To meet the necessary expenses of sickness to which all are liable, general care, medical attendance and prescriptions, special nursing, etc.

8. To provide for one's self and dependents, if there be such, decently liberal facilities for intellectual, moral, and religious culture, and for keeping

informed upon current events and topics of general interest as time goes on.

9. To maintain a reasonably generous hospitality towards friends and acquaintances, strangers and others brought incidentally into contact with us, according to position in life and the promptings of kindly interest and good will.

10. To meet necessary traveling expenses and other incidental demands that may be justly made in the ordinary course of human events.

11. To pay honorably all just public taxes and all rightful claims for the preservation of social order and the general well-being of the community, as becomes good citizenship in the neighborhood or town.

12. To be able to contribute liberally to worthy charities and philanthropies, to help the poor and needy making their appeal for aid, and to support equitably and cheerfully, in co-operation with others, the institutions of education, benevolence, and religion in general society.

Thus have I named twelve just, necessary, and commendable uses to which property may be put in fealty to the requirements of Primitive Christianity. They are all sanctioned if not prescriptively enjoined by the Founder and Head of our holy religion, and are in happy accord with the principles and spirit of the New Testament.

For the general guiding of conscientious people in regard to personal expenditure, etc., and to prevent serious misjudgment and capricious abuse, while

allowing considerable latitude for the exercise of individual opinion, some such general rule as the following may be suggested as worthy of observance, viz.: Never to appropriate to one's self, family dependents, or personal favorites, for exclusive use or consumption, more property in the aggregate than would be each individual's average equitable share if all mankind were ordering their lives by the teaching and example of the Man of Nazereth and according to the supreme law of love to God and man. This I regard as the proper basis on which to make an estimate of the amount of one's rightful possessions; all accumulations exceeding the figures thus ascertained, honestly and honorably acquired, being held as a trust, to be judiciously and scrupulously devoted to benevolent and humanitary uses and to the building up of the kingdom of righteousness, peace, and joy on the earth. One might, in the spirit of self-sacrifice and at his own discretion, appropriate any given amount less than the average determined as stated to his own personal advantage and for the supply of his own and dependents' necessities, but should carefully avoid exceeding it. And according to one's ability thus obtained of doing good in the world would be the satisfaction and happiness realized in the fulfilment of the Saviour's declaration, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

Some no doubt will question my positions and conclusion and say, as you interpret Christian morality in its application to property, we must never make money or acquire means of any kind contrary to the commandments: "Love thy neigh-

bor as thyself"; "Do unto others as you would have others do unto you." Exactly so. But that would keep us in perpetual indigence, or, at least, in exceedingly straitened circumstances, financially considered. Are you quite sure of this? Are you quite confident that the course I propose and submit as enjoined by pure Christianity, would make or keep the general mass of people poor, even amid the abounding selfishness of the world? If so, I can but feel that you have fallen into grave error. It might prevent any one, or at least but few, from becoming very rich, but it would not and could not reduce the multitude to poverty or prevent those making a beginning in life without pecuniary means from gaining an ample competency, or in many cases from rising to independent affluence and a ready command of resources for all reasonably desirable uses. This I sincerely believe, for the reason that productive industry in any honorable calling, intelligently pursued, accompanied by a due degree of precaution and frugality, all of which are specific Christian duties, will be blest of divine providence and insure fair returns and ultimately abundant (not super-abundant) accumulation. Misfortune or calamity or other adverse circumstances might occasionally prevent such results, but this would be in exceptional cases, and would not disprove the general rule. The natural and legitimate fruit of leading a life of industry, simplicity, frugality, such as the precepts of Christianity justify and approve, is an ample sufficiency of worldly possessions for all rightful personal and domestic uses, with a surplus

for liberal hospitality and openhanded though not princely charity.

Thus have I expounded and illustrated what seems to me to be the pure Christian doctrine in regard to the acquisition, management, use and disposal of worldly possessions, or of what is termed property. And I appeal in closing to the understanding and conscience of my hearers (and readers) for a verdict in its favor. Is it not pre-eminently just, wise, beneficent — worthy of acceptance and of practical exemplification? Is not the world suffering for the reason that men are not ordering their lives in accordance with it; are not realizing it in some good degree? So I sincerely and devoutly think and believe, and I must preach and teach accordingly. Nay, more, I must strive to act in all respects consistently with such preaching and teaching, and exhort my fellow-men — all over whom I have influence, to do the same. And may the divine Father and his beloved Son through the Holy Spirit help me and them to be faithful evermore.

DISCOURSE XVIII.

ON THE PRIMITIVE CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE CONCERNING MENTAL CULTURE.

"Why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right."—*Luke* xii. 57.

"Be not children in understanding; howbeit, in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men."—1 *Cor.* xiv. 20.

Some modern critics and reputed reformers depreciate and discredit Christ and the early promulgators of his religion on the ground that they ignored the importance of the human understanding, and did nothing to promote intellectual culture by means of schools, colleges, or other institutions of learning; by philosophical inquiry, general literature, the fine arts, etc. It is assumed by such that these ancient worthies were either too ignorant or too superstitious, or perhaps both, to take any interest in things of that nature, their chief if not only care and concern being to maintain and propagate a certain type of religious belief, with its corresponding piety and morality, which they claimed had been revealed from heaven. Are these censors and detractors of the Founder of Christianity and his ministers just? And is their contention reasonable? And ought their strictures to be taken seriously as disclosures of the incompetency of those against

whom they are made for the work they professedly undertook to do — the work of morally and spiritually renovating and uplifting humanity and bringing in the kingdom of God. I think not. Let us candidly and thoughtfully consider the subject brought to our attention by these inquiries. Upon it we want "the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but truth," land us where it may.

I freely concede that the personages alluded to established no seminaries or institutions of learning, technically so called, and made no systematic provision for the promotion of science, art, philosophy, or general literature. Such institutions under different names and of more or less value existed in those days in Judea, Egypt, Greece, Rome, and other parts of the world. I concede also that those first teachers of Christianity did not prescribe it as a Christian duty to patronize and support such existing institutions, nor to found similar ones of their own devising. They regarded some of the instruction commonly given in those institutions and some of the accomplishments commonly taught as mere "worldly wisdom," which was "foolishness with God," puffing up and perverting the student. But I do not for a moment grant that they were opposed to such institutions *per se*, or to any kind of useful knowledge *per se*, or to any kind of intellectual culture or accomplishment in itself considered. Nor do I grant that those men were so ignorant as to know nothing of the institutions of learning then in operation, nor so narrow-minded as never to consider their uses and

general salutary influence. Nor do I grant that they ever prohibited, hindered, or discouraged Christians from obtaining the advantages of such institutions if available and unobjectionable; much less from founding and supporting new and better ones of their own whenever opportunity and ability might enable them so to do. And least of all do I allow that they forbade, despised, or neglected the free exercise of the understanding or what we call the reasoning faculties in man. On the contrary, I maintain that they made it an imperative duty — a part of their morality — to cultivate by continued, honest exercise the intellectual nature. That they did so and that they regarded such culture a matter of moral obligation, constitutes the special subject of consideration in this discourse. But before adducing proof in support of this position, I propose to justify Christ and his immediate ministers for their omissions and commissions respecting this matter of mental training and culture.

1. They established no educational institutions; this is admitted. And why? Because it was simply impossible for them to do so under those circumstances of agitation, privation, and persecution amid which they were placed. Jesus himself was engaged in public labors only about three and a half years, going about doing good, preaching the Gospel of the kingdom, with his life in his hand, as it were, and of course had no time or strength for projecting and founding organized and well-equipped institutions of any sort. His disciples after his crucifixion became intensely interested and occupied in study

ing and propagating the great truths of their religion. For this they were continually beset and harassed by bitter opposition, encountering men by day and night seeking cause for having them imprisoned and put to death, most of their leaders actually coming to an early martyrdom. Who can imagine that persons thus conditioned would or could evince an active interest in the pursuit of knowledge or in devising ways and means of promoting its acquisition?

2. These primitive laborers in the Christian field did not enjoin it upon themselves and their fellow-disciples to patronize and support schools, colleges, etc., already founded or to establish and equip new ones more closely conformed to any advanced ideas they might entertain on the subject of intellectual culture. Well and wisely so; and for three reasons. (1) Existing institutions were either closed against them on account of their heretical faith, or were under the control of intolerant opposers, or were agencies for upholding doctrines and practices which they could not conscientiously approve. (2) Times and circumstances, as already stated, rendered it impossible for them to found new ones. (3) In the natural course of the things under the new system of faith and life, such institutions on general Christian principles, would arise when conditions and circumstances favored, without special precepts or commands. So it seems to me they acted wisely and well in the matter.

3. They regarded much that was taught in the schools of their day as useless and some of it perni-

cious — a mixture of scientific or other truth with superstition, idolatry, and vain philosophy. Nothing was truer than this as time and increased wisdom have proved. There is useful knowledge, that which is of value to the learner, and there is knowledge which is without utility and utterly unprofitable; and there are foolish and demoralizing accomplishments in the educational curriculum, as there are refining and ennobling ones. Primitive Christianity was justly opposed both to pernicious instruction and to needless instruction, as it was to empty and degrading manners and customs, though fashionable and courtly. Moreover it did not deem the most unexceptionable and commendatory scholastic attainments essential to salvation; promotive of virtue, piety and happiness, unless controlled by moral and religious principles and the spirit of love to God and man. Hence it was the chief, the leading purpose of its representatives to disseminate far and wide as possible the great distinguishing principles and spirit of their religion as of most vital importance, believing and feeling that under their inspiration and guidance, education, mental training, intellectual attainments, would be duly provided for, and that when the proper time should come and favoring opportunity should arise, all needful means and appliances for the development, training, and strengthening the powers of the mind — for the acquisition of useful knowledge, would be supplied. They held to and lived by the injunction "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these shall be granted you."

And who can say in good conscience and with sound judgment they were not right, acting not only from high and noble motives for the cause of pure and undefiled religion and the good of humanity, but under that inspiration of the Almighty which giveth men understanding and in the line of that wisdom which is "profitable to direct." I believe they were. I have seen too many learned apes, literary epicures, plodding bookworms, scholastic pedants, and too many educated profligates and villains to worship merely intellectual attainment. With high-toned moral principle and sterling common sense the more learning the better. But without the former the latter is likely to be of little practical value or to be put to a bad use — to feed self-conceit and the spirit of caste, or prey upon or make serfs and pack-horses of the unlearned and more easily beguiled masses of mankind. There is a broad distinction existing between mere scholarship and true wisdom. There may be much of the former, while the rational faculties, the powers of the understanding, are undisciplined, feeble, inert. Hence there are many so-called educated people who cannot reason from first principles or recognized facts; who are the slaves of bookish authority and established formulas, but who cannot think out of their narrow professional ruts. There can be no true wisdom and no complete education without original thought, fresh inspiration, and a free exercise of the understanding. And without true wisdom, men will be foolish, ignoble, degraded, vicious, despite any mental culture, acquisition, refinement, they may possess. And herein

I see clearly why Christ and his apostles assumed the position they did in respect to the culture and exercise of the reasoning faculties — the powers of the understanding, whose importance, as a matter of fact, they clearly recognized, and whose aid they often invoked as they prosecuted their mission of redemption to the world. They knew that the intellect must be baptized by religion and sanctified in order to attain its best and do its grandest work. They knew that neither tradition, nor philosophy, nor blind belief, nor science, nor literature, any more than spasmodic emotion or rhapsodical sentimentalism, could renew the individual soul in righteousness or save the world from folly, degradation, and iniquity. They knew, too, that there must be, with faith in God and the eternal verities, also divine truth, fundamental principles of duty, deeply rooted and intrenched in a freely acting judgment and an enlightened intellect. This brings us to a consideration of the bearing which both their example and their teaching have upon the matter.

1. *Their example.* What kind of a public teacher or preacher was Christ himself? The record of his labors shows that he was earnest, sincere, uncompromising, often parabolical and intensely figurative, in his utterances, and that he always had some great thought, idea, or principle of virtue or piety to present, uphold, and urge upon his auditors, appealing directly to their reason and judgment no less than to their feelings and the deeper emotions of their hearts. He was in no sense a ranting declaimer, a smooth-tongued rhetorician, an artful manipulator of

words and phrases, arresting the attention of the crowd and dealing in flattering appeals to ignorance, superstition, and selfishness, or in terrific denunciations and threats of impending doom. He was as calm, sober, unimpassioned, reasonable, as he was wise, positive, firm, strict, inexorable in his expositions of truth and duty. He never equivocated, played fast and loose with principle, or hid the message given him to deliver and bear witness to in a cloud of misty verbiage. He spake "as one having authority and not as the Scribes." This appears in the Sermon on the Mount, in his parables of the Prodigal Son and the Good Samaritan, in his picture of the judgment, in his debates with sophistical opposers, and in his more private intercourse with his disciples. He always addressed not only the better feelings and the moral sense in men but their reason and understanding, impliedly urging upon his hearers at every interview the once expressed reproving inquiry, "Why of yourselves judge ye not what is right?"

His ambassadors so far as we have reports of their utterances or writings were men of similar characteristics in this regard. They were not, as a rule, what would be termed educated, scholarly men, but men of intellectual vigor and strength, as they were of good common sense. Like the Master they indulged in no platitudes or sentimentalisms, but, conscious of having a message to deliver, they delivered it directly, tersely, impressively, often with pungent force. As examples of this, see Peter's address on the day of Pentecost; also his two Epistles and the Epistles of James and John.

Paul, the most learned and technically logical of all the early champions of the cause of Christ, says of himself, "My speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the spirit and of power." — 1 *Cor.* ii. 4. His discourse on Mars Hill, in the presence of the philosophical, refined "men of Athens," was a profound and masterly production, freighted with great and solemn truths, and will be preserved and valued, no doubt to the end of time, as one of the grandest specimens of forensic eloquence charged with a lofty moral purpose which the world affords. And his letters, especially that to the Romans, bear upon their face striking evidence of his intellectual vigor, reasoning ability, and power of expression, as they do of his reverent spirit, his lofty aim, and his unfaltering devotion to the great Teacher whom he professed to follow and to serve. The pertinency of these observations to the subject in hand lies in the fact that they show not only what intellectual gifts the Apostles possessed, but how faithfully they employed them in the prosecution of their great life work, and how well calculated their spoken and written words were to stimulate thought in the minds of those addressed, and to commend the truths to which they testified to the deliberate judgment and understanding of their hearers, ministering alike to their intellectual vitality and nurture, and to their moral and spiritual life.

2. *Their precepts.* These in large number prove conclusively that their authors were by no means indifferent to mental culture and the use of the

reasoning powers in the study and practice of religious truth, but rather held them in high regard, as the following examples show. "He that received seed into good ground is he that heareth the word and understandeth it; who also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundred fold, some sixty, some thirty." — *Matt.* xiii. 23. "Have ye understood all these things? Every scribe instructed in the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man, a householder, who bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old." — *Ib.* 51, 52. "He called the multitude and said unto them, Hear and understand." — *Mark* vii. 14. "Why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right." — *Luke* xiii. 57. "Judge not according to the appearance but judge righteous judgment." — *John* vii. 24. "Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free." — *John* viii. 32. "To this end was I born and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice." — *John* xviii. 37. Such is the testimony of the great Teacher himself bearing directly upon the subject under consideration. That of the Apostles is no less explicit and conclusive. Paul, writing to one of the churches in which he had a profound interest said, "I speak as unto wise men; judge ye what I say." — 1 *Cor.* x. 15. "Except ye utter with the tongue words easy to be understood, how shall it be known what is spoken?" "I will pray with the spirit and I will pray with the understanding also; I will sing with the spirit and I will sing with the understanding also." "I had rather speak

five words with my understanding * * * than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue." "Brethren, be not children in understanding * * * but in understanding be men." — 1 *Cor.* xiv. 9, 15, 19, 20. "I pray that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment, that ye may approve the things that are excellent." — *Phil.* i. 9, 10. "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good." — 1 *Thes.* v. 21. "God hath not given us the spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind." — 2 *Tim.* i. 7. Hear also James. "Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? Let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom." — *James* iii. 13. And John, "The son of God has come and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true." — 1 *John* v. 20. And finally Peter, "Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts; and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you." — 1 *Peter* iii. 15.

We see from these extracts that their authors recognized the importance of the understanding in the work of enlightening and redeeming men, and the duty of employing it in the consideration and practical illustration of the great lessons of life. Why this duty should be performed by each and every one seeking his own and others highest development and permanent well-being is made clear by a few reflections.

1. The understanding is an essential, constitutional part of human nature. And without its

proper and proportional development, activity, use, there can be no symmetrical, all-sided character, such as Christianity is designed to promote and secure; only a malformed, defective one. In its legitimate and divinely appointed office the religion of Christ contemplates every department of man's being, with a view of bringing it into active exercise within its own distinctive limits, and into true and harmonious relations with all other departments and with the entire whole; so that there may be produced a full-orbed, perfect manhood, "according to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." But this cannot be done if the intellect is ignored, neglected, or abused. The animal propensities and passions, appetites and desires, may be duly alert, fulfilling their several functions in an orderly way; the emotional nature — the feelings, impulses, aspirations of the heart may be in full exercise and wisely subordinated to the law of righteousness; the moral and spiritual faculties may be also serving their designed uses in keeping the soul awake to the eternal realties and to its intrinsic relation to God; but if the reason be left unemployed and the understanding is not exercised there is radical defect in the totality of one's being; manhood is seriously impaired and the divine design is so far frustrated.

2. Moreover, the reason and understanding, in the true order of human development and activity, constitute the controlling element in the nature of man. The passions, propensities, desires, appetites, may sometimes, by their own motion, act wisely

and beneficently, but are far more likely to do otherwise; they are liable to run into very great excesses and to work immense mischief, unless held in check and properly directed. They are not self-controlled. And the same may be said of the higher human faculties. The affections, pure as they may be, are yet blind, and capable of great harm. The conscience is by no means a sufficient guide unto itself. Unduly exercised, morbidly active, it has produced a severity or moroseness of character quite unlike the tenderness and grace of Christ; wrongly directed, it has fostered the most bitter and unrelenting persecutions. And the religious sentiment, left to its own unenlightened and unguided impulse, runs readily into irrational and odious superstition and fanaticism. These all need the regulating, directing, all-controlling power resident in the understanding animated by the spirit of God, to hold them to their true office, and to enable them to serve effectually the real ends for which in the infinite plan they were designed.

3. The intellectual nature of man — the reflective, reasoning faculties — the judgment and understanding, are furthermore indispensable to a proper balance of the other departments of human nature and to the whole personality; are necessary to give dignity and strength to character and nobility to manhood. He is a weak man, an unreliable man, a man shorn of real power for good, who is incapable of deep thought, of comprehending great principles of truth and duty, of entering by profound study and contemplation

not only into the secret chambers of the material universe to bring out therefrom treasures of wisdom hidden from the foundation of the world, but into the plans and purposes of God in the realm of souls, bringing thence eternal verities, and the things that pertain to the kingdom of heaven. While he, who, by an intelligent understanding and a sound judgment, is qualified for these exercises and attainments, is invested with something of the everlasting strength, is clothed upon, in a measure, with the panoply of God. He is not only strong in himself to rule every member and faculty of his own being, to resist temptation, and to stand fast in his own integrity, but strong to accomplish important ends in the world, to war against the evils that afflict humanity, and to build on the earth the habitations of righteousness, brotherhood, and peace. Strong too is he to shape the future to finer issues and help bring in the better era to the children of men.

4. The human intellect bears definite relations to the truth in every department of existence, as the eye does to the light, or the ear to harmonious and delightful music. It is therefore through the intellect — by the culture and use of the intellect in its higher manifestations — through the reason and understanding that truth is not simply discovered, but comprehended and made real to the consciousness. In the same way, and in that way only, can discrimination be made between truth and error, as is necessary in order that error, with all its damaging, demoralizing influences and effects, may be eliminated and put forever away; and that truth

be exalted to the supremacy in human life and in the world which rightly belongs to it. In the same way, by the legitimate exercise and use of the understanding, can the relative value and importance of different kinds or classes of truth be determined, and a just distinction be made between truths of great and those of little value, in themselves considered or in the conduct of life; between those truths that are incidental to human welfare and happiness and those that are essential and so of indispensable importance. And the work thus indicated must be done, or men will continue to be in the future as they have been in the past, the subjects of all sorts of illusions and hallucinations, falsities and fallacies, and the victims of a vast multitude of sophistries and deceits, wherewith so many are beguiled and led away, not only from the truth but from the God of truth also, to their own destruction. "The truth," said Jesus, "shall make you free;" free, not alone from error, but from folly, sin, and moral death. Therefore to seek the truth and to know the truth is a primary vital concern with every rational, moral, immortal being; and to nurture, train, exercise, and employ those faculties in the human constitution by which truth is discovered, apprehended, and made serviceable to the necessities of mankind, are duties never to be lost sight of, underestimated, or neglected. To do this is to sin against one's own soul and against God, the Author of all man's nobler powers.

I have thus given the chief reasons why the intellectual department of human nature, in the

higher range of its faculties, should be regarded, nurtured, trained to the utmost extent, and put to its proper ligitimate uses. Each one of them might be elaborated and illustrated to an indefinite extent. But I have said enough to show how naturally the duty indicated comes within the scope of the primitive morality of the Gospel of Christ, which includes all the powers and faculties of man's nature as subjects of its authority, and requires the consecration of them all to the service of God and man. Woe be to him who neglects the gift that is in him; who hides in a napkin any talent with which God has enriched his being. To such it shall be said, "O thou wicked and slothful servant." "Take the talent from him" and give to him who will use it wisely and well. "And cast the unprofitable servant into outer darkness. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Let us faithfully regard the obligation Primitive Christianity imposes upon us in this particular. Then shall we enjoy and impart to others the blessedness whereunto we are called in Christ Jesus.

DISCOURSE XIX.

THE PRIMITIVE CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE RESPECTING THE USE OF TALENTS, ETC.

"Unto whom much is given, of him will much be required." — *Luke* xii. 48.

"Walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil." — *Ephs.* v. 15, 16.

"As we have therefore opportunity let us do good unto all men; especially unto them who are of the household of faith." — *Gal*, vi. 10.

The primitive Christian morality does not allow its disciples to lead an irresponsible, idle, careless, vain, or useless life. It imposes upon every one professing allegiance to it the obligation to employ his talent, time, and opportunity with conscientious fidelity, to the glory of God and for the good of humanity; and thus to make existence most beneficent, most noble, and most happy. In this requirement and the purpose underlying it true religion and reason concur. Let us consider then the important duties which these statements involve and enjoin.

1. All persons possess what is termed talent, skill, or capability, in greater or less degree, to be used wisely and well or to be neglected and abused. This possession may be natural or acquired. It may be physical, intellectual, moral, or spiritual.

It may consist in power of industry, in ingenuity, judgment, knowledge, or personal influence — in what may be called material, mental, or spiritual goods; no matter what it may include or be named so long as it is an endowment or attainment that can be exercised or employed in some effective way to some specific end. Whatever it be, and whatever the amount — much or little — the possessor is a steward in trust, responsible to God for the best possible use of what he has. He who has most has none to lie idle or misuse; and he who has least should by no means neglect or disregard what he has, but be all the more diligent in employing it to some worthy purpose. All are to occupy and improve the estate of which they have charge. All are to give account, sooner or later, for use and disuse, for improvement and abuse alike. I need not quote precepts, examples, or illustrations in proof of these declarations.

The morality whose claims and demands I have thus clearly indicated is without question a sound, wholesome, excellent morality, worthy of acceptance and of universal exemplication. Mankind generally are prone to assume that those who have great talents or capacities of any kind may employ them chiefly if not wholly for their own advantage, pleasure, or glory. At least they are inclined to think that such persons, if they devote some certain portion — a small portion perhaps — of what they have to generous and noble uses, to the betterment of human conditions, to causes of reform and charity, to the promotion of the divine kingdom, they may

do as they list with the remainder — spend it all upon themselves or upon what conduces to their own personal profit, aggrandizement, and gratification. But Primitive Christianity countenances no such irresponsibility to God, no such blind devotion to self, even in respect to the least fraction of one's gifts or faculties, however great or multitudinous they may be. Whatsoever and how-much-soever one may have of the possessions under notice, *all* is to be used, under a deep sense of personal accountability for the good and happiness of mankind, one's self included. The greater, wiser, more capable I am, the more just, considerate, kind, benevolent, helpful, am I sacredly bound to be towards those less favored than myself. And if I am animated by the real spirit of Christ, the happier shall I be.

Again, mankind are prone to assume that those who have little talent, wealth, or ability of any kind are under no sacred obligation to use wisely and well what they do have, will be held to no very strict account in the matter, and are of very little consequence in the world, any way ; and may therefore be excused for doing nothing to bless the world — for hiding their talent in a napkin ; while, correspondingly, others may be excused for treating them with indifference or contempt. But the morality of the Gospel allows nothing of this on either hand. It does not measure human responsibility or human worth by the amount of talent, learning, worldly accummulations, etc., one may have ; nor by any great and notable thing one may do, by reason

of such possessions. It rather teaches that every soul is of inestimable value in and of itself, as a creature and child of God, and that every grade of ability, from the lowest to the highest, is of intrinsic importance and will be held to its own proper responsibility, making the mite of the poor widow, given out of heartfelt love and loyalty to her Lord, greater than the most generous contributions of the opulent capitalist or money-getter rolling in wealth. It does not excuse but condemns the steward who had but one talent for burying it in the earth, as it does not excuse but condemns those of superior ability and of larger accumulations of whatever sort for under-estimating or despising their less fortunate brethren. All are under obligation to do their best with whatever they possess, as they are to love and respect, to serve and help one another. This is a morality worth having; and whatever is contrary to this is foolish, mean, and undesirable.

2. All persons have time to use or abuse; to improve or fritter away to no good purpose. What may be deemed innocent and approved uses of time, and how may it be wisely and effectively improved, according to the spirit and requirements of Primitive Christianity? These inquires are essentially answered in the following specifications: When it is employed and devoted (1) To moral and religious nurture, edification, and fellowship; (2) To intellectual training and the acquisition of useful knowledge; (3) To industrial pursuits and business activities for the purpose of obtaining the means of subsistence for one's self and dependents, with a

surplus for other good uses; (4) To needful rest from ordinary toil and such recreation and pleasure-seeking as may contribute to one's health, strength, and happiness; (5) To travel, within reasonable limits, and the enlarged acquaintance with the world and things in it incidental thereto; (6) To the discharge of the duties pertaining to charity, hospitality, friendship, and kindly social intercourse. Such are some of the more necessary, fraternal, beneficent, and justifiable expenditures of time, as the days and years go by. And they are quite in keeping with the spirit and letter of our text and of many other passages of Scripture; such for instance as the following: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness." "Be not slothful in business." "Be not children in understanding." "Study to be quiet and to do your own business and to work with your own hands as we commanded you." — 1 *Thess.* iv. 11. "When we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work neither should he eat." — *Thess.* iii. 10. "Rejoice with them that do rejoice and weep with them that weep." "Giving all diligence, add to your faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly-kindness; and to brotherly-kindness, charity." — 2 *Peter* i. 5–7.

3. Opportunity for the various duties, pursuits, and purposes of life comes more or less to all men; to be improved or neglected as each one may will or determine. Opportunities there are for religious

and moral culture, for mental training and attainment, for useful occupation and business cares, for rest, recreation, and rational amusement, for the various offices of charity, hospitality, friendship, and ordinary social intercourse, A few have exceptional opportunities for these things; the many, only commonplace and customary ones; still other few, meager and ineffective ones. Primitive Christianity imperatively enjoins faithful improvement of each and all of these; the greatest and the least alike, as it does of talent and time; excusing no neglect and duly crediting and honoring fidelity in the humblest as well as in the most exalted and influential capacities and positions; the obligation resting upon each and every one "according to his several ability." Thus it is said, "Well done good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." — *Matt.* xxv. 23. "Whosoever hath to him shall be given; and whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have." — *Luke* iii. 18. "He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much, and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much." — *Luke* xvi. 10. "Take heed therefore that the light which is in thee be not darkness." — *Luke* xi. 35. "Walk while ye have the light lest darkness come upon you." "While ye have light, believe in the light that ye may be the children of light." — *John* xii. 35, 36. "Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth and having on the breastplate of righteousness." "Pray-

ing always with all prayer and supplication in the spirit and watching thereunto with all perseverance." — *Ephs.* xi. 14, 18. "Be ready to every good work." — *Titus* iii. 1. "To do good and to communicate forget not; for with such sacrifices God is well pleased." — *Heb.* xiii. 16. "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith." — *Gal.* vi. 10.

From the foregoing considerations and quotations it is made to appear beyond all question or cavil that the pure morality of the Gospel of Christ requires those acknowledging allegiance to it and professing to be governed by its principles and precepts, to be a responsible, diligent, upright, sober-minded, circumspect, intelligent, humane, charitable people, prepared and ready for every good word and work, as well as for every new revelation of truth and duty that may come to them in the order of God's providence. And is not this sound doctrine — a high and indispensable type of morality? Undoubtedly it is, and absolutely necessary to individual dignity and happiness, to the welfare of families, and to the most elevated, refined, desirable condition of civil and social life. How unchristian and ignoble is an irresponsible, indolent, thriftless, time-killing, dawdling man or woman, who spends the swiftly passing days and years in doing nothing useful, or as a busy-body in other people's matters, or as a consumer of what some one else has produced. Such an one is an excrescence upon the body politic — a nuisance and often a pest in human society.

In the light of the lessons thus brought to our attention, every one should in all seriousness ask himself the following heart-searching questions: Who am I? How came I into the world? For what purpose or end was I created? In what way can I realize that purpose or end to myself and to mankind? To what good and noble use can I put my varied powers of body, mind, and soul? By what means can I improve my capabilities, my time, my opportunities, to the best advantage; reverently toward my Maker, rightfully toward myself, and fraternally toward my fellow human beings? Christianity as Jesus taught and exemplified it sets forth and magnifies the grand fundamental truth that life is a trust — a sacred trust — to be spent and enjoyed under a living sense of personal responsibility, and to be consecrated to holy aims and beneficent uses that relate both to the world that now is and to that which is to come. And this statement brings to mind several points of interesting inquiry which have been raised touching the subject under discussion.

1. It has been queried whether this primitive Christian view of life and its obligations, as delineated, makes needful provision or allowance for that freedom from care and anxiety, that refined and luxurious ease consequent upon large accumulations of wealth, social distinction, hereditary rank, or some other form of worldly superiority or advantage. The plea is sometimes made by a certain class of philosophers that man naturally desires to rise above the necessity of manual or other forms

of labor; the necessity of being harassed by the details of business, etc., in order that he may be at liberty to enjoy himself as he pleases, in the gratification of his inclinations and tastes, so long as no one is harmed or wronged thereby; and that the existence of a class of persons of that character in society is calculated to promote the general welfare and advance the permanent interests of the race. What have I to say to this criticism of Primitive Christianity and its theory of life and its uses? I answer that no such aristocratic or superior class is contemplated or can exist under the provisions and injunctions of the religion of the New Testament. But I may concede that as the world in its unregenerate state has been from the beginning until now, such a class is a natural and inevitable outgrowth of existing conditions of individual and social life and indispensable to any and every hitherto attainable form of civilization. And so it may continue to be for generations to come, or until the prevailing social and moral order approximates much more nearly than at present the morality of the sermon on the mount.

I do not, however, concede that because the worldly-minded man, or the man content to live and act upon the existing worldly plane of human affairs, naturally desires to shirk productive industry, active service, and all the graver responsiblities of life, so that he may be wholly at ease and enjoy himself as he pleases, it is therefore best for himself or for others that he should do so — best for his own health of body, mind, and spirit, or best for the

community in which he resides and for the world. I rather consider such a course a misfortune, or perhaps a calamity to him who follows it and to others as well. To have no great and noble object to live for, no useful occupation or calling to pursue, no mission of active service of truth, virtue, or humanity to fulfill, is to me as dismal and forbidding as it is foolish and wrong. I have only pity for a child doomed to grow up amid pampering wealth, luxury, and ease, and so to be trained to inertia, helpless dependence, and soulless effeminacy, or perchance to splenetic restlessness and joyless discontent, and not to self-reliance, independence of spirit, and other essential elements of a manly and noble character. I pity too the man who turns from the well-earned success of a stirring and honorable business career, loaded with wealth and worldly advantage, and hastens to stifle and destroy his finer sensibilities and his more exalted powers by luxurious indulgence and enervating pleasure. Child of folly is he, "paying too dear for his whistle." Grinding poverty is deplorable, to be sure. So is excessive, slavish toil. But not more so than the opposite extreme at which I have hinted. Solomon found the end of all his riches, pleasures, and luxuries, to be "vanity and vexation of spirit," and by sad experience learned the lesson he put into Agur's prayer; "Remove far from me vanity and lies; give me neither poverty nor riches: Feed me with food convenient for me: Lest I be full and deny thee, and say, 'Who is the Lord'; or lest I be poor and steal, and take the name of my God in vain."

2. There are some who wish to know if it be not a defect of Primitive Christianity as I expound it that it has no provision for recreation, amusement, merrymaking, but seems to hold its disciples to one continuous, unrelieved strain of sober, earnest work in some department of solid usefulness, temporal or spiritual? I reply (1) There is little occasion for positive religious instruction in favor of anything of this sort, any more than there is of eating and drinking, since it is sure to assert its claims as an essential need of human nature in a way not to be ignored or underestimated. (2) Christ and his early disciples incidentally recognized approvingly and participated in the festivities and pastimes of their day and generation. (3) They forbade nothing of the kind, only so be it was innocent and healthful and strictly conformed to those great principles of truth and duty which were to govern all human action. It was far better therefore to leave this matter open and free, as was done with many other human interests, rather than to control it by specific precepts and regulations. Besides, if avowed followers of Christ live up to their privileges and duties they will suffer little for want of mere professional amusement, their faith, hope, love, being to them an ever-flowing fountain of gladness and joy; while any incidental diversion or merriment will be as innocent and pleasurable as it is natural and spontaneous. It is care-worn worldlings, the devotees of wealth and fashion, weary plodders in some field of deep research, and those chasing after emptiness and

vanity, who find life tiresome or unendurable without frequent resorts to artificial pleasures and delights to cheer them in their onward pilgrimage. The misfortune of such is that they are liable to fall into excesses in their search for relaxation and enjoyment which are perilous alike to health and morals, and against which they should constantly be on guard. Innocent and invigorating amusement held to proper limitations the morality of the Gospel in no wise prohibits or condemns, but allows and justifies.

3. Again, there are those who depreciate and make objection to New Testament Christianity on the ground that it ignores or at least underestimates the importance of scientific research and attainment, belles-lettres, the culture of the fine arts, etc., and by implication regards the talent, time, and opportunity devoted to these and kindred interests as misdirected, wasted, or abused. To such objection or criticism I reply that if the things referred to were absolutely essential to human virtue and happiness, or were a constituent part of pure and undefiled religion, the point raised would be of serious consequence. But they are not, in my judgment. Innocent of harm and worthy of respect and approbation in and of themselves, yet they are practically good, bad, or indifferent, according to the use made of them. They are in their very nature unmoral, and have no inherent tendency, independent of conscience and the religious sentiment, to render those devoted to them or mankind at large truly wise, upright, pure, generous, benevo-

lent, Godlike. In fact their devotees, as a class, are much like the common average of men, selfish, bigoted, heartless, inhuman, unless their scientific, aesthetic, or artistic tastes and tempers are softened and sanctified by a loving and devout spirit. Indeed, there is a marked tendency among them to an exclusive empiricism or charlatanry, a professional conceit, and a corresponding contempt of those outside their own special circle, however exemplary and noble such outsiders may be in all moral and spiritual qualities.

To be sure, the Christian religion does not distinctively commend and enjoin the several pursuits referred to; neither does it condemn them or in in any way hinder progress in them towards the highest possible results. It rather approves them as the outcome of the divinely-ordered nature of man, and as ministers under wise guidance to human development, growth of character, and the higher life of the world. Their place in human thought and confidence, as in the divine plan of the universe, is a subordinate and not a controlling one, and, in reference to them as to many other concerns of humanity, it may be said, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and then may all these things be added unto you." Whenever I see scientists, or artists of any name, or votaries of literature, or poets, or any other class devoted to some special line of study or achievement, treating God, or Christ, or the principles and precepts of the New Testament disdainfully, or casting contempt upon the champions or disciples, how-

ever humble they may be, of moral and religious truth, I can but regard them as foolish and blind, having mistaken the secondary for the primary, and turning away from divine and eternal realities to those things that at best are but subordinate and tributary thereto. Alas for those who, absorbed in the contemplation of the wonders, and glories of the material universe, cannot discern in them the foot-prints of Deity — who can not look through nature up to nature's God. Alas for those *literati* who are so bewildered by the scintillations of genius or the charms of polite and refined literature that they have no appreciation of moral and spiritual verities, and of those divine qualities of heart and soul which are the everlasting adornments of human character, and which render finite man most like the infinite Father in heaven. And alas also for those who can admire the beautiful, the grand, the lovely, in nature and in art; in landscape and in sky; in painting and sculpture; but who have no eye to see the transcendant beauty of holiness, the loveliness of truth, justice, mercy, self-sacrifice; the grandeur and majesty of a life consecrated to noble ends and aims, and radiant with the gentleness, grace, and peace of Christ.

I therefore conclude the present discourse, which completes my exposition of the distinctive morality of Primitive Christianity, by repeating the claim that such morality as Christ taught by both precept and example, in its application to the use of the talents, the time, and the opportunity of which we all are to greater or less extent in charge, is of pre-eminent

and unrivalled excellence. And it becomes us all, if we are believers in that morality, and acknowledge the obligations it imposes upon us, to order our lives in the respects brought to notice according to the rules and requirements herein set forth, illustrated, and commended to the favorable consideration of my hearers. So shall we be found worthy to receive the approving plaudit of our own consciences and of the righteous Judge of all his subjects, "Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things; enter into the joy of your Lord."

All hail, thou promised day,
When ethics so sublime
Shall the last vestige sweep away
Of selfishness and crime!

When Zion's Prince of Peace
Shall every wrong redress;
Shall bring to slaves of sin release,
And all earth's millions bless.

Then shall the nations sing,
In joyous grand refrain,
Glad anthems to their heavenly king,
Whose right it is to reign.

DISCOURSE XX.

PRIMITIVE CHRISTIAN MORALITY vs. WORLDLY MORALITY.

"Ye are the salt of the earth; but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing but to be cast out and to be trodden under foot of men. Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle and put it under a bushel but on a candle-stick, and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven."—*Matt.* v. 13–16.

"If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness how great is that darkness!"—*Matt.* vi. 23.

"They are not of the world even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth. As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world."—*John* xvii. 16–18.

Having given in previous discourses a somewhat thorough exposition of my views upon the primitive morality of the Gospel of Christ, it is now incumbent on me to unveil the more noteworthy corruptions thereof which have taken place in the church since the middle of the second century and which to a considerable extent have been perpetuated unto the present day. In order to do this effectively, it seems necessary at the start to take a hasty glance at what may be termed worldly morality in general,

as distinguished from Christian morality, and especially in its prevailing form at the time when Jesus appeared in Judea and went about doing good. Also to bring to notice in contrast therewith, the actual virtue and piety existing among Christian believers before any marked deterioration took place. By this method the cause, the nature, the progressive evolution, and the extent of the mischief done can be the more fully disclosed and understood. And so I beg leave to call attention to a few important particulars.

1. It is to be remembered that the world as a whole as well as each and every considerable unitary portion of it, like a nation, or a race, or a tribe, has always had a morality of some sort; that is, some acknowledged standard of duty — some commonly recognized ideas of what is right, proper, allowable in human conduct, and what not so. The general moral standard of mankind at large differs from age to age as does that of the several nations or peoples of the earth. But some such standard always exists, higher or lower, more or less perfect. It is a legitimate outgrowth of the moral element in human nature. Some standards have been and are essentially religious; others, ethical; others philosophical, or civic, or chivalric, as the case may be; and others of a mongrel character difficult to classify or name. What may be called worldly morality, or the morality of mankind as a whole, is of this complex nature. It is a consensus of opinion or average moral judgment derived from the various religions, superstitions, philoso-

phies, civic laws, codes of honor, social customs, personal habits and practices, prevailing at any given period of human history. It is much the same with the morality of any particular nation or group of kindred nations. In select circles and among the more closely allied portions of the people, we find more definite and sometimes stringent standards of duty and righteousness; with the more loosely affiliated and less intelligent and moral, rather indefinite and elastic ones; and with the gross multitude, very vague and easy-going ones. In general society and throughout the community at large in any land or time, the law of the state or nation interwoven with general custom and the prevailing fashion, and having a background of military necessity, determines to the large majority of people the course of conduct to be pursued in the ordinary affairs of life. Even to this standard many prove delinquent, and have to be made subject to it by severe discipline and the power of magistracy. Beyond and above this there may be to certain ones some vague superstitious fear of a vindictive God and His possible retributions, about which, however, they practically care but little, except when startled by some frightful calamity or aroused by pungent and declamatory exhortation. It is because there are so many people of this description in the world — so many who have no higher law of duty to live by — that human governments, fortified by penal laws and military force, have always been indispensable to civil and social order and the common welfare. And they will never

cease to be so until by the regenerating processes of truth and love such people in large numbers shall no longer exist upon the earth. Christianity proposes to rid the world of them by such processes, which shall result in raising them to its own sublime level, where a living sense of duty in their own souls and a clear revelation of the will and law of God shall hold them back from overt acts of wrong and keep their feet in the way of righteousness, without the aid of magistrates and courts, of penal inflictions and the strong arm of injurious force. Meanwhile, the more respectable and refined, those somewhat higher in the moral scale, as they are in manners and in social position, yet bound to the same fundamental system of civil and social order as they are partners in it, will have made corresponding advance, contributing their proportionate share to the general uplifting and enlightenment, to the diffusion of higher and nobler principles of action and a humaner spirit, and to the coming of the day when God shall write His law upon the hearts of men and they shall be governed thereby rather than by human enactments, popular opinion, prevailing custom, and the fashion of the time. Primitive Christianity demands of its confessors fealty to its own high standard of morality based upon the two great commands of love to God and man, and disregard of all lower ones as more or less treasonable to Him whose right it is to rule, and prejudicial to human good and happiness.

2. And so I am led to remark that it is hard to rise above the prevailing morality of one's age

and country and still harder to keep above it persistently and continuously. The reasons for this are easily ascertained and brought to light. (1) By so doing one loses sympathy, social position, vantage ground, and many desirable possessions and enjoyments. To be unpopular, to stand alone, to give up agreeable associations, as one must do in such a case — to incur obloquy, ostracism, censure, denunciation perhaps, is painful to the great majority of people. (2) He who dissents from the common judgment of his fellow-men cuts himself off from most of the prerogatives, honors, and emoluments which they are ready to give to their favorites and those ready to further their special ends and aims. He must do his work for God and man in humble, unappreciated, thankless ways, requiring that keen moral insight, fidelity to duty, courage, and firmness which few men possess or can command. (3) One seeking to live by a higher standard than that of the general public must for conscience' sake forego many opportunities of doing the good he desires in co-operation with others by customary social and political methods and means, on account of the obligations and responsibilities he is required to assume as a condition of such co-operation. At the same time, for refusing to accede to the prescribed conditions and thus cutting himself off from activities in which he would be happy to engage, he must suffer the reproaches of less enlightened and less conscientious persons who accuse him of standing idly by when a wrong needs correcting or a right thing needs promotion,

and doing nothing for the accomplishment of the desirable and praiseworthy object in view. Yet such a person true to his principles and faithful to the higher light that has been given him, is, in the long run, doing more for the cause of truth, for his country and his kind, than the most stirring actor on the lower plane of temporizing expediency and immediate seeming success. Few are wise and good enough to maintain so high and impregnable a position, necessary though it be to the world's regeneration. And it is no wonder that the early church after a time fell from it under the influence of powerful temptation, grew corrupt, and by a fatal compromise lowered its standard to the moral level of that of the world at large as represented by the Roman empire, within whose boundaries it was set up. Even in our own day we see reformers, philanthropists, professing Christians of every name, doing the same thing; conforming to the maxims and practices of political managers and counting the instrumentality of civil government as the chief staff of accomplishment. Religion, philanthropy, moral reform are of little value in their esteem as agencies of human progress and redemption without the sceptre, the purse, and the sword of political power; without the caucus, the ballot, the penal statute, the court-house, the prison, the gallows, and a mighty armament of deadly force. Not so thought Christ and his primitive disciples, who stood firmly and uncompromisingly aloof from and grandly above everything of the kind, as they wrought their blessed work.

3. And now let us consider what was the actual prevailing morality of primitive Christian days in Palestine and throughout the then known world. There were at that time, no doubt, as there always have been, individuals and associated groups of people, whose ethical code was far above that of the general mass of men. And the common code had, without question, many excellent and commendable features. But the average moral status of society was nevertheless deplorably low and vicious. Josephus gives us a graphic description of it as it was among the Jews. We can hardly conceive of anything more revolting. And Roman historians and other Gentile authors testify to the abominations which existed in all directions, among all ranks and grades of social and political, and even of religious, life. Many of the gods of the Greek and Roman mythologies were infamous in character — rapacious, unjust, wanton, vindictive, cruel. Naturally those who worshiped and imitated them were not likely to excel them in virtue and moral worth.

The morality of the leading Jewish religionists of that day — of those who ministered at the altars of faith and piety, who served in the sanctuaries of the Most High among the ancient people of God, was scarcely better than that of the lower classes, or that of the Gentile nations. Its quality is readily determined by the fact that it so often fell under the ban of the Master's stern rebuke and condemnation. His most emphatic denunciations, his most poignant woes, were pronounced against men stand-

ing high in the Church — chief-priests, Scribes, Pharisees — "who make broad their phylacteries and enlarge the borders of their garments, and love the uppermost room at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, and greetings in the markets, and to be called of men Rabbi, Rabbi," for they were "like whited sepulchres which indeed appear beautiful outward but are within full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness." They "paid tithe of mint, and annis, and cummin, and omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith;" they "devoured widow's houses and for a pretense made long prayers;" they "made clean the outside of the cup and the platter but within they were full of extortion and excess;" they "bound heavy burdens and grievous to be borne and laid them on men's shoulders, but would not move them with one of their fingers;" "all their works they did to be seen of men;" they "appeared outwardly righteous unto men but within they were full of hypocrisy and iniquity." Such being the character of the leaders in the Jewish church and ministers of religion, it is no marvel that the standard of morality among the masses of the people was low and inadequate, or that the representation of the abounding profligacy and wickedness of Jewish society in the times under notice was substantially correct — true to the existing facts in the case.

And Paul in numerous passages of his epistles, notably in the first chapter of his letter to the Romans, portrays the widely existing demoraliza-

tion of non-Jewish people and nations. "Professing themselves to be wise" he says, "they became fools and changed the glory of the invisible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonor their own bodies between themselves; who changed the truth of God into a lie and served and worshipped the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed forever.—*Rom.* i. 22–25. And again: "Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful; who, knowing the judgment of God that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in those that do them."—*Rom.* i. 29–32. A gruesome and revolting picture truly, but not more so than the facts in the case, as attested to by Gentile writers themselves, warrant and corroborate.

Over against this gross and widely-prevailing immorality and brutishness stands the pure ethical ideal of the Gospel of Christ, as I have in previous discourses delineated it; an ideal born of the righteousness of the infinite God, taught and practically illustrated, first by the Master himself and afterward by those professing allegiance to him and

authorized to propagate the truth and grace which came by him as far and wide as possible among men. That ideal they magnified and proclaimed with a fidelity and self-sacrificing devotion unprecedented in the history of mankind. And their success was as marvelous as it was sublime. In the space of two centuries they wrought among large numbers of the common people of Asia Minor, Greece, and Rome, a moral revolution; most radical, salutary, expansive, the results whereof no language can adequately describe. Their work did not reach its culmination till near the end of the third century, though it began to lose somewhat of its power a hundred years before; from which time it gradually declined until finally overcome and brought to an end by the overwhelming forces of worldliness, political ambition, and sinful indulgence, marshalled against it.

That the ideal morality of the Gospel of Christ was to a large degree exemplified in the early church is the testimony of both sacred and so-called profane history. The enemies of the new religion, who, for political or other reasons, sought to hinder its progress and overthrow it, were busy in inventing all sorts of slanders against its disciples, in order to create a feeling of hostility to them in the public mind. They charged them with various criminalities with a view of having them brought before the civil tribunals and condemned, either as traitors to the government or as dangerous elements in society. To these unfounded and malicious calumnies numerous refutations or apologies were

written by prominent Fathers in the church, who were therefore called Apologists, some of the more masterly of which have been preserved to this day, affording us testimonies worthy of notice in this connection. They were designed to enlighten the minds of the more influential in general society and in the government and so allay increasing hostility and prevent persecution. To some extent, no doubt, the object in view was accomplished. From these Apologies I subjoin a few extracts.

Justin Martyr, one of the most eminent of Christian Fathers, living in the second century, in his plea for his brethren addressed to the emperor, Antoninus Pius, which was instrumental in bringing the then existing persecution to an end, writes thus: "We follow the only unbegotten God through his son; we, who formerly delighted in fornication but now embrace chastity alone; we, who formerly used magical arts, dedicate ourselves to the good and unbegotten God; we, who valued above all things the acquisition of wealth and possessions now bring what we have into a common stock and communicate to every one in need; we, who hated and destroyed one another and on account of their different manners would not live with men of a different tribe, now, since the coming of Christ, live familiarly with them and pray for our enemies, and endeavor to persuade those who hate us unjustly to live conformably to the precepts of Christ."—*Ante-Nicene Library, Vol. II, p.* 17. "We have been taught, and are convinced, and do believe that He (God) accepts those only who imitate the excellences that

reside in Him; temperance, and justice, and philanthropy, and as many virtues as are peculiar to a God who is called by no proper name." — *Ib.* pp. 13, 14. "We ought not to strive, neither has He (Christ) desired us to be imitators of wicked men; but He has exhorted us to lead all men by patience and gentleness from shame and the love of evil. And this indeed is proved in the case of many who were once of your way of thinking, but have changed their violent and tyrannical disposition, being overcome by the constancy which they have witnessed in their neighbors' lives, or by the extraordinary forbearance they have observed in their fellow-travellers when defrauded, or by the honesty of those with whom they have transacted business." — *Ib.* p. 20. "On the day called Sunday all who live in cities or in the country come together in one place, and the memoirs of the apostles or writings of the prophets are read; * * * the president verbally instructs and exhorts to the imitation of these good things. Then we all rise together and pray and * * * when our prayer is ended, bread and wine and water are brought; * * * and there is a distribution to each * * * and to those who are absent a portion is sent by the deacons. And they who are well to do and willing give what each thinks fit; and what is collected is deposited with the president who succors the orphans and widows and those who through sickness or any other cause are in want, and those who are in bonds, and the strangers sojourning among us, and in a word takes care of all who are in need."—*Ib.* p. 65.

Athenagoras, a Grecian philosopher converted to Christianity, in an appeal to one of the emperors disproving the charges of atheism, profligacy, and cannibalism that were current against Christians, says: "We have learned not only not to return blow for blow, nor to go to law with those who plunder and rob us, but to those who smite us on one side of the face to offer the other side also, and to those who take away our coat to give likewise our cloak." — *Ib.* p. 376. "Allow me here to lift up my voice boldly in loud and audible outcry, pleading as I do before philosophic princes. For who of those that reduce syllogisms, and clear up ambiguities, and explain etymologies, etc. and who promise their disciples by these and such like instructions to make them happy; who of them have so purged their souls as instead of hating their enemies to love them; and instead of speaking ill of those who have reviled them * * * to bless them and to pray for those who plot against their lives?" "But among us you will find uneducated persons and artisans and old women who if they are unable by words to prove the benefit of our doctrine yet by their deeds exhibit the benefit arising from their persuasion of its truth; they do not rehearse speeches but manifest good works; when struck they do not strike again; when robbed they do not go to law; they give to those that ask them and love their neighbors as themselves." — *Ib.* pp. 386, 7. "Our account lies not with human laws which a bad man can evade * * * but we have a law which makes the measure of rectitude to consist

in dealing with our neighbors as ourselves." — *Ib.* p. 416.

These views of the high morality of the followers of Christ during the opening centuries of our era, though given by witnesses from within the pale of the church, are yet entitled not simply to respectful consideration but to unhesitating confidence. The circumstances under which they were originally made public and the effect produced by them are a sufficient warrant for such confidence. Moreover, they receive substantial corroboration from so distinguished a historian as Edward Gibbon, whose well-known skeptical turn of mind relieves him of all suspicion of partiality for disciples of Christ in either ancient or modern times. In the Fifteenth Chapter of his "History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire" he testifies in numerous paragraphs to the exceptional moral character of the primitive Christian, who, he says, "demonstated his faith by his virtues;" adding that "it was very justly supposed that the divine persuasion, which enlightened or subdued the understanding, must, at the same time, purify the heart and direct the actions of the believer." He also undertakes to present certain reasons or motives which in his judgment "might render the lives of the primitive Christians much purer and more austere than those of their Pagan contemporaries or their degenerate successors."

Such then was the morality of the followers of the great Nazarene in those days when even their enemies were constrained to exclaim, "See how

these Christians love one another." Oh, that this sublime morality had been transmitted in its integrity and purity, faithfully and incorruptibly down to our own age? What a vast and glorious regenerative work would have been wrought ere this, and how much nearer than now should we be to the perfect kingdom of God on the earth.

DISCOURSE XXI.

INCIPIENT CORRUPTIONS OF PRIMITIVE CHRISTIAN MORALITY.

"Ye did run well. Who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth? This persuasion cometh not of him that calleth you. A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump."— *Gal.* v. 7–9.

I am now to treat of the corruptions which tarnished the surpassing splendors of primitive Christian Morality during a brief period subsequent to the middle of the second century, confining myself in the present discourse to what transpired between that date and the year 325, which was signalized by the union of church and state under the auspices of Constantine the Great, first Christian emperor of Rome. In volume one of this work I traced the development of theological corruption in those early as well as in later times, and in the opening chapters of the present one have done the same in respect to the perversion of what I call the pietistic side of religion. The causes that wrought mischief in those particulars produced a corresponding effect upon the characters and lives of Christian believers,— upon the moral standing of the church. It was difficult to sustain such a pure and exalted theology, piety, or morality as Primitive Christian-

ity embodied against the opposing downward pressure of the unregenerate world, and the wonder is that they remained firm and unyielding as long as they did; the moral element withstanding the adverse forces more persistently and successfully than the others. That did not show any perceptible indications of compromise or deterioration till towards the end of the second century, and then not to an alarming extent. In fact, it displayed great and aggressive vigor in most respects till after the middle of the third century, and to a still later period maintained a marked superiority to the average standing of the people of the Roman Empire. But the virus of corruption had been introduced into the Christian brotherhood, and had begun to work mischief in various noticeable ways. Some of these I beg leave to specify, following as nearly as I can the historic order of their appearance.

1. About the first flagrant departure from the simplicity and purity of the primitive morality was the use and partial sanction of pious frauds for the promotion of good objects. Eminent pagan philosophers, like Plato and Pythagoras, are said to have justified certain kinds of deceit and falsehood when worthy ends could be gained thereby, and especially in cases of supposed great necessity. And certain philosophical converts to Christianity entertaining that view, held and proclaimed the same ethical theory in respect to spurious miracles, legends, etc., which were calculated to arrest attention, multiply converts, and strengthen, as was thought, the Christian cause. Such expedients won

their way into favor and were strenuously defended by casuists of considerable eminence. Lying was of course condemned in the abstract and as a general rule of social intercourse; but there were cases when it would be so strikingly serviceable to the church — cases in which it would so silence opposers, convince doubters, and increase adherents, that it was at least allowable if not indispensable. Yet it was absolutely contrary to pure Christian ethics, and the more reprehensible the better the object to be gained by it. For a bad cause is less disgraced and injured by deceit and falsehood than a good one. And the holier a cause the worse it is to commit any wrong in support of it. Alas, not so in the judgment of carnally minded zealots, and artful dissemblers in church or state! With such "the end sanctifies the means;" and speedy success proves fitness of policy, no matter what moral principle is violated or what moral injury follows. Pure morality forbids all such theories and all conduct based upon them. Its dictum is, "Putting away lying speak every man truth with his neighbor." The worst man must not be assailed by slander or misrepresentation, nor the worst institution; much less is the best to be defended or helped by such means. The devil is not to be cast out nor is God to be exalted by the best-meant falsehood imaginable. Nevertheless, the temptation is too strong for ordinary virtue to resist, and lying for righteousness' sake has seldom been out of fashion in any exciting movement; religious, philanthropic, reformatory, or political.

Yet it is an offense and an abomination to an enlightened conscience, whether practiced by a sworn Jesuit, a sectarian zealot, a fiery iconoclast, or an unscrupulous politician. A little leaven of this sort leaveneth the whole lump. So it was in the days of which I am speaking. The church was clandestinely inoculated with the virus of this immorality, and though seemingly a little matter and harmless at first, it yet increased in amount and in malignancy until the whole mass was infected and demoralized by it. Of its more open and outrageous excesses and mischiefs I shall speak hereafter.

2. Clerical pride, ambition, and usurpation crept stealthily into the church and seriously contaminated it. The first apostles, evangelists, pastors and teachers engaged in the maintenance of Christian institutions and in the propagation of Christian truth exercised only a moral and spiritual authority on a fraternal level with their lay brethren. They were humble, unassuming, self-sacrificing instructors and helpers of the people; loved, trusted, heard, followed, as divinely-gifted servants of God, not as masters and "lords over God's heritage." They remembered the injunction of Jesus not to assume official authority, not to exercise arbitrary power, not to be called Rabbi, Rabbi. They claimed dominion over no one's faith, they dictated no fixed ecclesiastical policy, they desired no servile homage, but in all things pertaining to the administration of church affairs or to the common welfare they took counsel of their fellow-disciples

and united harmoniously with them in the adjudication of all matters in which they had a common interest. And as they went forth disseminating the principles of the Gospel, diffusing its spirit, and extending its power from city to city and from country to country, the churches they established were independent of each other, having no bonds of ecclesiastical confederation save those of fraternity and mutual charity.

Dr. Mosheim the distinguished church historian already quoted says, "Each Christian assembly was a little state governed by its own laws, which were either enacted or at least approved by the society." "But," he adds, "in process of time all the Churches of a province were formed into one large ecclesiastical body, which, like confederate states, assembled at certain stated times to deliberate about the common interests of the whole." "These councils, of which we find not the smallest trace before the middle of this (the second) century, changed the whole face of the churches and gave it a new form; for by them the ancient privileges of the people were considerably diminished and the power and authority of the bishops greatly augmented." "At their first appearance in these general councils, they acknowledged that they were no more than delegates of their respective churches, and that they acted in the name and by the appointment of their people. But they soon changed this humble tone, imperceptibly extended the limits of their authority, turned their influence into dominion and their counsels into laws; and openly asserted at

length that Christ had empowered them to prescribe to his people authoritative rules of faith and manners." "Another effect of these councils was the gradual abolition of that equality which reigned among all the bishops in the primitive times." "This occasioned the creation of a new order of ecclesiastics, who were appointed in different parts of the world as heads of the church, and whose office it was to preserve the consistence and union of that immense body whose members were so widely dispersed among the nations. Such were the nature and office of the patriarchs, among whom at length, ambition, having reached its most insolent period, formed a new dignity, investing the bishop of Rome and his successors with the title and authority of prince of the patriarchs." — *Eccl. History, Second Century, Part II, Chap.* 2.

At the same time the clergy began to assume, and soon persuaded the people, that they had succeeded in the Christian church to the "character, rights, and privileges of the Jewish priesthood." So the bishops claimed the dignity of high priests, the proselyters or elders that of priests, and the deacons that of Levites. Thus pride, assumption, and usurpation, having gained such vantage-ground, went on from bad to worse. And before the second century closed, Victor, Bishop of Rome, haughtily excommunicated the Asiatic Christians, clerical and lay, for refusing to celebrate the paschal day, so called, contrary to his orders. In this display of arrogant folly, he assumed to be the head of the entire church, with absolute power to issue decrees

and ecclesiastical laws for no better reason than that he was the metropolitan bishop of the empire. But it amounted to nothing more than an exhibition of his insolent arrogance and conceit, and an indication of the demoralizing process which was going on in the church. During the third century these mischiefs became gross and chronic as appears from further extracts:

"Many (of the clergy) were sunk in luxury and voluptuousness, puffed up with vanity, arrogance, and ambition, possessed with a spirit of contention and discord, and addicted to many other vices that cast an undeserved reproach upon the holy religion of which they were the unworthy professors and ministers." "The bishops assumed, in many places, a princely authority, particularly those who had the greatest number of churches under their inspection, and who presided over the most opulent assemblies. They appropriated to their evangelical function the splendid ensigns of temporal majesty,—a throne, surrounded with ministers; exalted above his equals the servant of the meek and humble Jesus, and sumptuous garments dazzled the eyes and the minds of the multitude into an ignorant veneration for this usurped authority. The effects of a corrupt ambition were spread through every rank of the sacred order. —*Ib. Third Century, Part II, Chap.* 2.

In view of these statements, which might be greatly extended, it is sufficient to remark that such a clergy, who, by their official position had great influence over the laity, very naturally and inevita-

bly wrought great harm to the church, reducing its average morality to a sad state of degeneracy and preparing the way for that malign union of the civil and ecclesiastical powers which ere long took place, to the practical obliteration of those great moral and spiritual qualities which had previously characterized the church and made it the light of the world.

3. Quite in harmony with the growing corruptions spoken of and their degrading effect upon the character and life of the common Christian fraternity, another very naturally was developed, scarcely less prejudicial to the interests of pure and undefiled religion, in itself considered and in its influence upon those affected by it, viz.: an abandonment of hitherto cherished peace principles and an ambition for military service and distinction. Before the year 150 no professed Christian is known to have been enrolled in the Roman or any other army. All participation in the arts of war was universally denounced by the church down to that date and by the majority of its members for a hundred years afterward. One of the chief charges made by the pagan polemical writers, as well as by the representatives of the civil power, against the Christians was that they would not become soldiers or fight, even in support of the government. Some who were conscripted refused to bear arms and were put to death. Many others were subjected to imprisonment and various disabilities on account of their uncompromising scruples against taking the life of their fellow-men or otherwise doing them harm.

But after pious frauds and priestly arrogance gained a foot-hold in the church it was perfectly natural and easy for the military spirit — a love of warlike display and martial ambition — to follow in their wake. They all belong to the same demoralizing category of worldly and unchristian habits and practices, born of a frame of mind utterly antagonistic to the mind of Christ. To be sure, the defection in respect to all these things was at first very slight, as the influence producing it was also very subtle and unsuspected, but, once started, it, in each case, grew with ever-increasing rapidity and virulence. This was no less so with the evil of militarism than with that of lying to promote the cause of truth, or of priestly domination and dazzling ecclesiastical equipage in order to gain accessions to the church and enhance the power and glory of Christ's kingdom. By slow and sure degrees that evil, notwithstanding here and there a faithful testimony against it and a heroic effort to resist it, became strongly intrenched in the masses of both clergy and laity, and the primitive peace-loving, war-opposing character of the church was, to all practical intents and purposes, utterly destroyed. And when, at the end of the first quarter of the fourth century, the contest arose between the professed Christian Constantine and his pagan rivals for the imperial sceptre, not only the prayers but the swords of nearly the entire church, in its then demoralized condition, were enthusiastically thrown into his end of the scale, and this probably turned it decisively and triumphantly in his favor,

thus bringing the greatest empire of antiquity nominally under the standard of the cross. That eventful consummation, achieved by force and arms, seemed, in the estimation of the Christian populace, to render war conclusively justifiable when waged for the purpose of extending the boundaries of Christ's kingdom and of lifting his church to a position of commanding importance among the nations of the earth. From that day, which witnessed the complete submergence of the primitive morality of the Gospel beneath the waves of worldly expediency and ambition and its sycophantic subjection to political domination, only a lean minority of avowed believers in Christ have stood faithfully by his teaching and his example in the matter under notice. The great bulk of both clergy and laity through the intervening generations and ages have clung tenaciously to all the secular, social, political, and other advantages and emoluments derived or supposed to be derived from the sceptre, purse, and sword of the existing civil government, whatever its name, character, or form of administration might be. And among the stoutest and most indomitable champions of the mighty war system of the world and its vast complex enginery of bloodshed and death in modern times, have been ministers and laymen of different branches of the church. However much they may extol and glorify the great Prince of Peace in their religious services and convocations, they have little regard for him as such in many of the most important concerns of life, and in times of great excitement and

peril, in the momentous crises which from time to time come to men and to nations, they deem his spirit of perfect love inadequate and pitiably weak, trample his most sacred precepts and principles in the dust as unworthy of practical consideration, and postpone an application of his teachings touching human brotherhood and the treatment of enemies to human conduct in its larger activities to some better coming day of the world's history.

I have mentioned three of the most prominent and influential particulars in which the church had become sadly degenerate and corrupt at the time of the ascendency of Constantine the Great to the throne of the Cæsars, making possible its union with the civil government under his imperial sway. There were many minor ones which might be brought to view and descanted upon, if the demands of the subject in hand required it. It is plainly evident that those adverted to could not have existed to the extent indicated and received the general approval and sanction of ministry and people, without giving birth to and being accompanied by a multitude of kindred, though perhaps less pernicious and offensive, immoralities. Many of these will be brought to notice in subsequent discussions of this series of discourses. I therefore proceed to inquire how we can account for these moral backslidings and degeneracies.

1. We can say to begin with that they were natural and inevitable under the circumstances. Human nature in an undeveloped, unregenerate state is lamentably imperfect and weak — prone to

wrong-doing and easily swerved from the path of virtue and honor; easily tempted to be false to its own best impulses, aspirations, and convictions. And then the general tone of society at the time when these things occurred was morally low and so in no way capable of fostering or stimulating the higher and nobler qualities of human character. Men were ignorant, superstitious, selfish, brutal in many respects and to a wide extent. If Christianity was to be spread abroad in the world, if it was to go forth out of Judea and Palestine, it must be first preached to men as they were — men whose hearts were uncongenial to the truths of the heavenly kingdom, living in communities indifferent or hostile to its animating spirit and sacred lessons — and under the care of the eternal providence take its chances. Its primitive purity and excellence were not only in striking contrast to the then prevailing moral tone — to the opinions, feelings, purposes, habits and practices of men, but were a constant rebuke to them, and so little calculated to gain popular approval and acceptance. And yet its early successes were alike astonishing and salutary. The common people heard Jesus gladly. The day of Pentecost witnessed a marvelous transformation and multiplication of believers under the preaching of Peter. Paul went out through Asia Minor and Greece, even to Rome, proclaiming the Gospel, founding churches, and extending far and wide the name and power of the Nazarene. The divine contagion spread from village to village, from city to city, from province to province, until it

reached the very centers of Grecian refinement and Roman power, proving its heavenly origin by the uplifting, purifying, humanizing, spiritualizing influence and effect it produced upon the tempers, thoughts, manners, and lives of those who gave it hospitable welcome. Its progress during the first centuries of our era was one of the marvels of human history, to which even skeptical writers of modern times make ample acknowledgment.

And yet its pure wine of grace and truth had to be poured into earthen vessels, none too clean at best, and thence distributed to others also containing more or less contaminating and neutralizing odors or dregs, and so on indefinitely. And when, with the advance of time and increase of numbers, the glamour of popular favor and the promise of political and civil power dimmed the moral vision of believers and beguiled their hearts, what but a falling away from the original standard of virtue and righteousness — what but degeneracy and corruption could have been expected? Even at this late day we find how difficult it is to put new truths, principles, and purposes, into minds nominally willing to receive them without having them more or less modified, dilated, neutralized, by the chronic condition of those minds and by the perverse influence of social and political surroundings. And how much more difficult it is to have those truths, principles, and purposes, expressed in the habits and practices of individual life and in the customs and institutions of society. Pre-existing constitutional tendencies, education, and the prevailing currents

of the world at large, are too powerful to be wholly overcome in the very best of men and women — much more so in the great mass of people.

2. But in reviewing the history of the church during the second and third centuries and noting the deterioration which was going on within its membership, it is due to the facts in the case to say that, sad as it was, it did not sink to the level of the old heathenism from which Christian converts had chiefly come, or of that still prevailing in the world around them. Christianity at its lowest ebb was an improvement upon the religions and philosophies of the communities and countries in which it gained a foothold and became a permanent institution. The morality represented by such religions and philosophies, with a few bright exceptions, was horribly cruel, licentious, and debasing. The masses of the people under it were grossly corrupt and vile, and were crushed to the earth beneath the power of an unscrupulous and merciless despotism. Christianity wherever it gained the ascendency, lifted them out of the mire and filth of their own degradation, and measurably removed the burdens beneath which they had so long suffered and groaned in anguish and despair. It imparted to them new hope and a measure of new life. Our lamentation is, that, having once lifted those over whom it gained the mastery so high, it should have allowed them to sink so far towards their old estate again.

3. Nevertheless we can say with hopeful satisfaction that the degeneracy of the church never

wholly blotted out the primitive moral ideal or defaced beyond recall the record of its sublime achievements. The traditions of the early Christians have been preserved through all changes, and their fidelity and unfaltering zeal in proclaiming and exemplifying the principles and spirit of the Gospel of their acknowledged Master and Lord, imparted to their names and memory a light and a glory which still illuminate and gladden the world. That Gospel, though perverted, obscured, and in many respects practically nullified, has survived all the apostasies of its professed friends, the assaults of open enemies, and the manifold catastrophes that have befallen nations and races, remaining the same "glad tidings of great joy to all people" as of old, and "the power of God unto salvation." There, upon its divinely inspired pages, stands Jesus with his evangelists and apostles, whose pure testimonies and examples are the living and eternal rebuke of all the disgraceful and lamentable impieties and immoralities which have characterized a backslidden church as well as those of the unregenerate world. So that whenever a class of believers shall arise, intelligently, honestly, and uncompromisingly resolved to stand on the original foundation of Gospel truth, to slough off all foreign and corrupt accretions, and build according to the primitive ideal, their work will be exceedingly simple, well-defined, and comprehensible. Such believers shall sometime arise and such work will sometime be done, and be crowned with ultimate and triumphant success.

Some people — philosophers, reformers, advanced thinkers, as they claim to be — imagine that Christ and his ideals are to be outgrown, superseded, and forgotten, in the onward march of human progress. But that can never be unless mankind are to attain a degree of moral excellence and spiritual growth beyond and above perfect love of God and man, perfect righteousness of heart and life, perfect conformity to divine and everlasting principles of goodness and truth, which is alike impossible and unthinkable. Whatever new opinions, beliefs, theories, philosophies, discoveries, of a moral nature are to come, as come no doubt they will, men must still put on the morality of Christ — be animated by his spirit, be possessed of his transcendent and ever-blessed life. This to me is as certain and unmistakable as it is that the sun illuminates the material globe, and is destined to illuminate it to the end of time.

DISCOURSE XXII.

INCREASING CORRUPTIONS OF PRIMITIVE CHRISTIAN MORALITY.

"Whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother." — 1 *John* iii. 10.

"It is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and, The sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire." — 2 *Peter* ii. 22.

It is my purpose in the present discourse to trace the growing corruptions of primitive Christian morality from A. D. 325 to the end of the sixth century — about 275 years. In doing this I shall only attempt to call attention to a few important particulars.

1. Constantine, the acknowledged sovereign of the Roman empire, having adopted the Christian religion as his own and that of his dominion, proclaimed himself the head of the church as well as of the state. While allowing ordinary theological and ecclesiastical matters to remain where they had been, in the hands of the provincial bishops, higher and lower, and their synodical councils, he reserved all extraordinary ones to himself for oversight and adjudication. He made himself the final arbiter in important cases of controversy, assumed supremacy over all church officials, and claimed the right to preside at all general ecclesiastical councils. In

his exercise of usurped authority he promoted and degraded such of his subordinates as he pleased. He formally decreed the abolition of the hitherto established religion of the country, at least of all idolatrous worship, destroyed a multitude of heathen temples, and sequestrated the wealth they enshrined for the pecuniary benefit of the newly adopted faith. He caused new houses of worship to be erected, the splendors of which far outshone those of the ones which had been demolished, and filled them with images, pictures, and every conceivable embellishment that could attract, astonish, and delight the multitude. Moreover, he induced his opulent courtiers and parasites throughout the provinces to erect similar structures, over which he exercised the perpetual right of patronage; that is, the right to name the bishop or priest who should officiate at any time in one of those structures, without any power of appeal. Thus the long humble, conscientious, faithful, and often persecuted disciples of the lowly Jesus were virtually bought up, temporally and spiritually, by their imperial proselyte and supposed benefactor, or compelled by force of circumstances to submit to his dictation, while the enginery of persecution was turned against the heathen priesthood and devotees.

But what sort of a Christian was this Constantine, who had made himself the virtual head of the church and the master of its fortunes and destinies? He was a military chieftain, who, early in his public career, had served the empire during the reign of Diocletian, and who, later, had aspired to,

and at length, by his prowess and skill, had gained the throne of the Cæsars. In one of the campaigns of the long struggle which finally secured to him the object of his ambition he professed to have seen in the sky above him a flaming cross bearing the inscription in Greek, "With this you will conquer." So impressed was he with this vision that he at once avowed himself to be a Christian, ordered the crucifix to be placed on the shields and banners of his army, and went on his conquering way; victory succeeding victory until he had vanquished all his foes and obtained possession of the imperial crown, with an army at his command of 300,000 men and a naval squadron of 29 vessels. Thereafter he was known as Constantine the Great, and great he was no doubt as a warrior, a politician, a statesman, and a monarch, He was a man of quick perception, vast ideas, marvelous foresight, great mental power, inflexibility of purpose, and an iron will. But what he was as a Christian, or indeed as to personal character, is clearly indicated, not only by his general public life but by his private acts among his own family relatives. He murdered his father-in-law, his brother-in-law, his nephew 12 years of age, his son Crispus, and his wife Fausta; all under false pretexts, but really to get them out of the way of the realization of his ambitious and tyrannical designs. His whole character was in keeping with these bloody deeds, becoming more and more depraved and outrageous with his advancing age. Though avowing himself a Christian in midlife it was not until twenty-five

years later, when near his end, that he was baptized; probably from the absurd notion, then deemed orthodox, that this rite cleansed the subject from all sin and rendered him meet for heaven. His body was buried amid the grandest conceivable displays of funeral solemnity, pomp, and splendor, in the Church of the Apostles at Constantinople. This city he had make capital of the empire instead of Rome, having first changed its name from Byzantium, as it had been previously called, in honor of himself. And the great mass of Christian confessors with lamentation, eulogy, and imposing pageantry, wafted his soul to immortal glory. What he was as the head and what they were as the body of the Church may in view of these facts be more easily imagined than described. A holy and exemplary minority held fast to the simplicity and purity of the original Gospel, but the number was small and those composing it were comparatively obscure, undemonstrative, and powerless. The morality of emperor and subject, of bishops, priests, and people, was as unlike that of Primitive Christianity as darkness is dissimilar to light, or gall to honey.

The successors of Constantine until the opening of the seventh century were all nominal Christians, with the exception of Julian, nephew of Constantine, who openly abjured the Christian faith and re-instated paganism as the religion of the empire; for which reason he was called "the Apostate." They walked very closely in the footsteps of their illustrious predecessor, magnifying and making at-

tractive the outward observances of the church by costly ostentation and spectacular display, while personally they were ambitious, arrogant, oppressive, bloodthirsty, and in some instances foully sensual and corrupt. The most notorious of the score or more of them was Theodosius, also surnamed "the Great," who reigned from A. D. 379 to 395. He was deemed pre-eminently pious and orthodox. With some undeniable excellences of character he was a bitter, cruel, unrelenting bigot, a sanguinary warrior, and a ferocious persecutor. Soon after mounting the throne he announced his determination to exterminate the old worship, root and branch. He issued edicts against all heathen rites and ceremonies and instigated his Christian subjects to open and merciless warfare with those who practiced and justified them. The devastation of magnificent temples, the destruction of valuable libraries and depositories of art, the confiscation of the property of those who were persecuted to enrich his treasuries and those of the church, the bloodshed and death that ensued; all authorized by him and done in the name of Christ, go to show how infamously "great" he was in misunderstanding, perverting, and falsifying the Gospel, and in doing violence to the plainest and holiest precepts of the Master whom he professed to believe in and to serve. Nor was his fanatical, arrogant, merciless, sanguinary temper manifested towards the heathen alone. All dissenting, heretical parties in the church, however sincere, upright, devout, Christlike they might be, were no less the objects of his persecuting zeal,

and were hunted out, maltreated, pursued even unto death, with unsparing diligence and malignity. The followers of Arius, who rejected the doctrine of the Trinity upon which the approving seal of the empire had been set, were the objects of his special animosity. Though their numbers were large, all the churches of the East except in Jerusalem being under their control, he undertook their utter extinction as a branch of the established church. He deposed all the clergy in his dominions who would not sign the Athanasian creed and sent them into exile, imposed severe penalties upon all heretics, and allowed no such persons to follow any honorable and lucrative employment. Arians deprived by imperial edict of their long occupied houses of worship were forbidden to build new ones, even at their own expense, under threats of heavy punishment. During this reign blood was for the first time shed by authority of law merely and avowedly on account of theological opinions. "Priscillian, a Spanish bishop, was twice banished and finally put to death," and some of "his adherents, among whom were noble women, were tortured and executed." To this deplorable extent had primitive Christian morality been debased and vitiated in the high places of both church and state and throughout the entire hierarchy of assumed-to-be saints in the fourth, fifth, and sixth centuries of our era.

2. If we recur to the vices of whose incipient development I spoke in my last discourse, we find them waxing worse and worse — becoming more

flagrant and impious during the period now under review. Of pious frauds, Dr. Mosheim says: "Rumors were artfully spread abroad of prodigies and miracles to be seen in certain places, (a trick often practiced by heathen priests), the design of which was to draw the populace, in multitudes, to these places, and to impose upon their credulity." "Certain tombs were falsely given out for the sepulchers of saints and confessors; the list of such was augmented with fictitious names, and even robbers were converted (by sheer pretence) into martyrs. Some buried the bones of dead men in certain retired localities and then affirmed that they were divinely admonished by a dream that the body of some friend of God lay there. Many, especially of the monks, traveled through the different provinces; and not only sold, with the most frontless impudence, their fictitious relicts, but also deceived the eyes of the multitude with ludicrous combats with evil spirits or genii. A whole volume would be requisite to contain an enumeration of the various frauds which artful knaves practiced, with success, to delude the ignorant, when true religion was almost entirely superseded by horrid superstition."

Again, "It was now a received maxim that it was 'an act of virtue to deceive and lie, when, by such means the interests of the church might be promoted.'" "It had been adopted for some time past and had produced an incredible number of ridiculous fables, fictitious prodigies, and pious frauds, to the unspeakable detriment of that glorious cause in which they were employed. And it must be frankly

confessed that the greatest men and most eminent saints of this century were more or less tainted with the infection of this corrupt principle, as will appear evidently to such as look with an attentive eye into their writings and their actions."—*Ecclesiastical History, Fourth Century, Part II, Chap.* 3.

In depicting the morals of the clergy our historian testifies to a corresponding downward tendency. He says: "The vices of the clergy were now carried to the most enormous excess, and all the writers of this century whose probity and virtue render them worthy of credit, are unanimous in their accounts of the luxury, arrogance, avarice and voluptuousness of the sacerdotal order. The bishops, and particularly those of the first rank, created various delegates or ministers, who managed for them the affairs of their dioceses; and courts were gradually formed where these pompous ecclesiastics gave audience and received the homage of a cringing multitude." "The corruption of an order appointed to promote, by doctrine and example, the sacred interests of piety and virtue will appear less surprising when we consider that multitudes of people were in every country admitted, without examination or choice, into the body of the clergy, the greatest part of whom had no other view than the enjoyment of a lazy and inglorious repose. Many of these ecclesiastics were confined to no fixed places or assemblies, and had no employment of any kind, but sauntered about wherever they pleased, gaining their maintenance by imposing upon the ignorant multitude, and sometimes by mean and dishonest practices." — *Ib. Fifth Century, Part II, Chap.* 2.

So grew these enormities that our author, writing of the condition of things a hundred years later, says; "The arts of a rapacious priesthood were practiced upon the ignorant devotion of the simple, and even the remorse of the wicked was made an instrument of increasing the ecclesiastical treasury; for an opinion was propagated with industry among the people that a remission of sin was to be purchased by their liberalities to the churches and monks, and that the prayers of departed saints, whose efficacy was victorious at the throne of God, were to be bought by offerings presented to the temples which were consecrated to these celestial mediators." "So high was the veneration paid, at this time, to the clergy, that their most flagitious crimes were corrected by the slightest and gentlest punishments; an unhappy circumstance, which added to their presumption and rendered them more daring and audacious in iniquity." — *Ib. Sixth Century, Part II, Chap.* 2.

And if we inquire into the prevalence of the war spirit with its kindred vices, of whose generation and growing ascendancy in the church mention was made in my last discourse, we shall find the whole period now being scanned in more or less violent agitation, crowded with the formation and movement of military organizations, campaigns, battles, and widely extended bloodshed and slaughter of men; much of it all in the name of Christianity and avowedly for the maintenance and spread of the true faith. Emperors, princes, patriarchs, bishops, priests, and the laity, followed by the general rab-

ble, engaged in this sanguinary work with the most unscrupulous zeal whenever and wherever they had a cherished object to gain, whether in opposition to the heathen, to heretical parties and sects, or, as was sometimes the case, in hostile strife with each other. If here and there a voice was raised against this serpent brood of inhumanities and in re-affirmation of the principles of peace and good will, it was silenced by imperial decree and threats of penal vengeance or drowned by the general uproar of the people. Even rival patriarchs and metropolitan prelates made the sword the arbiter of their respective claims. As a specimen of such contention, carried on, not in the pretended interest of truth and justice or of any particular form of doctrine or of ecclesiasticism, I will quote further from my learned author.

"The bishop of Rome surpassed all his brethren in the magnificence and splendor of the church over which he presided; in the riches of his revenue and possessions; in the number and variety of his ministers; in his credit with his people; and in his splendid and sumptuous manner of living." "Hence it happened that when a new pontiff was to be elected by the suffrages of the presbyters and the people, the city of Rome was generally agitated with dissensions, tumults, and cabals, whose consequences were often deplorable and fatal." In the year 366, "one faction elected Damasus to that high dignity while the opposite party chose Ursicinus. * * * This double election gave rise to a dangerous schism and to a sort of civil war within the city of Rome, which

was carried on with the utmost barbarity and fury, and produced the most cruel massacres and desolation. This inhuman contest ended in a victory for Damasus, but whether his cause was more just than that of Ursicinus is a question not so easy to determine."—*Ib. Fourth Century, Part II, Chap.* 2.

Similar exhibitions of this corrupt morality on a larger or smaller scale characterized and disgraced Christendom thenceforth. The whole church fell into a state of chronic warfare, theological, ecclesiastical, proselytive, and civil, waged not infrequently with carnal weapons resulting in bloodshed and slaughter. Athanasianism and Arianism, in modern terms, Trinitarianism and Unitarianism, besides various other doxies opposed to each other, were in bitter conflict during the three centuries under review; sometimes with arguments and anathemas, sometimes with judicial proceedings and penalties, sometimes with force and arms. General Council after General Council was convened under civil and military protection, which, however, did not always protect, to settle points of doctrine or ecclesiastical preferences, in honor, professedly, of the great Redeemer and to promote the glory of God! So the most hateful tempers, the most bitter animosities, the most inhuman atrocities, the most sanguinary battles, demonstrated the rapidly increasing anti-Christianity of nominal Christendom. And whoever protested or refused to join the infamous masquerade was counted a traitor to the cause of Christ and sometimes subjected to martyrdom.

3. Meantime the spirit of religious persecution had become more and more deeply intrenched in the popular mind and like a poisonous bohon upas tree was diffusing its baleful virus far and wide in all directions. The great mass of professing Christians was infected by it, allowing it to gain a dominating influence over their hearts and lives. Pagans, Jews, heretics of whatever name, and rival sects, were made the victims of various forms of open hostility — proscription, malediction, excommunication, banishment, torture, death, — as temptation and opportunity occurred. On the other hand, those thus maltreated, when the tables were turned and the power in any locality came into their possession, revenged themselves in the same inhuman fashion and without compunction. While this was going on in the great centers of Christian influence and power and vicinity, Christianity itself, such as it was, continued to make converts and gain conquests in foreign countries and among barbarous peoples, sometimes by justifiable means, but quite as often by reprehensible ones,— even by fraud and violence and the grossest forms of oppression and outrage. In this way hordes of ignorant, degraded, half civilized people in central Europe, northern Africa, and western Asia, were brought to an acknowledgment of the Christian faith and made to swell the membership of the Christian church. What sort of disciples of the gentle, loving, holy Jesus these new-made saints were can be learned from our faithful chronicler of those days, Dr. Mosheim.

"All that was required of these darkened nations amounted to an oral profession of their faith in Christ, to their abstaining from sacrifices to the gods, and their committing to memory certain forms of doctrine; * * * so that they retained their primitive ferocity and savage manners, and continued to distinguish themselves by horrid acts of cruelty and rapine, and the practice of all kinds of wickedness." "The converted nations retained a great part of their former impiety, superstition, and licentiousness"; * * * "attached to Christ by a mere outward and nominal profession, they in effect renounced the purity of his doctrine and the authority of his gospel by their flagitious lives and the superstitious and idolatrous rites and institutions which they continued to observe."—*Ib. Sixth Century, Part I, Chap.* I.

When we consider the circumstances under which the church maintained its existence and wrought its work in those far off days as set forth in the quotations thus far made, and the manifold causes of deterioration and apostasy that were in operation, we can not be surprised at the general departure which took place from the pure morality of the Sermon on the Mount, and at the almost universal prevalence of debauchery, vice, and crime among those who bore the Christian name, making it difficult sometimes to distinguish them from the pagan multitudes in the midst of whom their lot was cast. Of the deplorable condition of things in this regard at the close of the fourth century, our author says; "When we cast our eyes towards the lives and

morals of Christians at this time we find, as formerly, a mixture of good and evil; some eminent for their piety, others infamous for their crimes. The number, however, of immoral and unworthy Christians began so to increase that the examples of real piety and virtue became extremely rare. When the major part of the bishops exhibited to their flocks the contagious examples of arrogance, luxury, effeminacy, animosity, and strife, with other vices too numerous to mention; when the inferior rulers and doctors of the church fell into a slothful and opprobrious negligence of the duties of their respective stations, and employed in vain wranglings and idle disputes that zeal and attention that were due to the culture of piety and the instruction of their people; and when, to complete the enormity of this horrid detail, multitudes were drawn into the profession of Christianity, not by the power of conviction and argument but by the prospect of gain and the fear of punishment; then it was indeed no wonder that the church was contaminated with shoals of profligate Christians, and that the virtuous few were in a manner oppressed and overwhelmed with the superior numbers of the wicked and licentious." — *Ib. Fourth Century, Part II, Chap.* 3.

And of the moral and spiritual condition of the church in the sixth century, he says; "The public teachers and instructors of the people degenerated sadly from the apostolic character. They seemed to aim at nothing else than to sink the multitude into the most opprobrious ignorance and superstition,

to efface in their minds all sense of the beauty and excellence of genuine piety, and to substitute, in the place of religious principles, a blind veneration for the clergy, and a stupid zeal for a senseless round of ridiculous rites and ceremonies. — *Ib. Sixth Century, Part II. Chap.* 3.

It hardly seems possible that a morality so pure and exalted as that of Christ and the apostles could become so wretchedly corrupted in almost every respect within the brief period of a few hundred years. But just as seemingly impossible things have marked the whole history of mankind. And again, it may seem incredible that those degenerate Christians, with the teachings of Christ in their hands, at least in the hands of their elders and bishops, should have claimed to be the true and only true church of Christ, and seek to suppress or exterminate any who, in honest loyalty to the Master, presumed to expose and rebuke their apostasy. But so it has been all through the ages to this very day. Even in our own time, if one plainly and uncompromisingly re-affirms the pure primitive Christian faith and practice, and exposes the corruptions that still do much to invalidate them in their application to individual and social life, calling men back to the original Gospel, as I feel it my duty to God and man to do, nine-tenths of the nominal Christian church, Catholic, Greek, and Protestant, to whom his animadversions and strictures emphatically apply, have no more doubt of their own genuine Christianity, or of his utter heterodoxy and fatal error, than those of fifteen hundred

years ago had, in respect to themselves and the few faithful prophets who stood for pure Christianity and testified against the prevailing degeneracy and fanaticism. Such is the traditional, educational blindness and self-sufficiency of multitudes of people, good, bad, and indifferent, today. Can they ever be overcome? Gradually, by indomitable, persistent effort, under the inspiration and guidance of the immanent divine Spirit. The primitive morality of Christ, founded on eternal principles of truth and righteousness must sometime prevail and fill the world with supernal light, beauty, glory. The true test of all creeds, professions, institutions, of all conduct and life, the same yesterday today and forever, is the old one of Christ; "By their fruits shall ye know them."

DISCOURSE XXIII.

DEEPENING CORRUPTIONS OF PRIMITIVE CHRISTIAN MORALITY.

"Wo unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward."—*Jude*, 11*th verse.*

The tide of demoralization was sweeping onward with resistless force at the opening of the seventh century, and as we descend into the deepening shades of the "Dark Ages" we can expect nothing but augmenting depravity and corruption. Nor will our expectation be disappointed. Morality had already become almost completely divorced from piety, and neither of them had more than a pretended likeness to the original Christian type. The former was metamorphosed into a selfish, barbaric, unscrupulous expediency; the former into a splendid heathenish ritualism. Pious frauds had set the whole church agog after bogus miracles and relics of saints; image-worship had been solemnly sanctioned by the highest ecclesiastical authorities; notorious sinners procured clerical absolution and favor by rich gifts; patriarchs and high prelates opposed and supplanted each other by craft and violence; luxury, licentiousness, and arrogance characterized the upper classes in church and

state — gross ignorance and superstition the masses of the people; the rising monastic orders exhibited numberless extravagances of asceticism and laxity, of mendicancy and avarice, of artlessness and craftiness, of fanaticism and composure, of zeal and stupidity, of virtue and vice, while whatever pure Christianity survived was proscribed or driven into obscurity.

While the church had been rotting and becoming putrid at the center, its circumference had been expanding by fraud and violence, until it embraced a vast multitude of barbarians, mercenaries, and hypocrites, who were actuated much more by the spirit of Beelzebub than that of Christ. The stronger of these preyed on the weaker with merciless voracity, and "might made right" throughout the once colossal Roman dominion. What was called the Western Empire, with Rome for its capital, had been overrun and subjugated by the Goths who were soon to be conquered by the Franks and Germans — all barbarians but Christian (?) barbarians. The Eastern Empire, with its capital at Constantinople, was in a state of constant ferment, but outlasted in a decaying condition the period I am now canvassing. The great Arabian prophet, Mahomet, had carried fire and sword through Western Asia and laid the foundation of a new religion, intrinsically aggressive and warlike, which rapidly brought a third part of Christendom under its arbitrary sway and filled the other two-thirds with terror and dismay. Thus internal and external conflicts at arms, with their manifold inde-

scribable calamities, became the actual, almost normal condition of the entire Christian world. The kind of morality, individual and social, likely to flourish under such conditions, within and without the church, can be easily imagined. It may be clearly portrayed by the presentation of a few well-authenticated facts.

1. We will consider at the outset the character and career of the reigning sovereigns of those times and their satellites. Of professed Christian emperors and kings there were some thirty between the sixth and tenth centuries. Among the earliest of these was Phocas, who, by a successful conspiracy and much bloodshed, rose from the rank of centurion to that of chief monarch of the East. Having gained possession of Constantinople by corrupting the army and bribing one of the two violent factions in the city, he massacred the fugitive emperor and his entire family — five sons being slaughtered before their father's face prior to his own death. The six bodies were thrown into the sea, the heads belonging to them being exposed in the streets of the capital to the insults or pity of the populace till putrefaction necessitated their burial. But this was not the end of indignity and outrage inflicted upon the overthrown imperial household. The eldest son, Theodosius, who had taken refuge in Persia, was hunted down and murdered, and not long after, the empress, who attempted to check the usurper in his mad career, was seized by his infuriated minions, tortured, like the vilest of malefactors, in order to extort a confession of her designs and

accomplices, and then with her three daughters beheaded. Those accused of loyalty to the former regime were condemned to die as traitors without a trial after having first suffered the most cruel tortures — tortures too revolting to be described. Yet this monster of iniquity and cruelty was with impious solemnities consecrated as the Lord's anointed by the Patriarch of Constantinople, who had been assured of his orthodoxy; and Pope Gregory the Great, afterwards canonized as one of the saints, pronounced upon the wretch one of his most flattering benedictions. Gibbon, the distinguished author of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, thus characterizes this murderous ruler:

"The pencil of an impartial historian has delineated the portrait of a monster; his diminutive and depraved person, the closeness of his shaggy eyebrows, his red hair, his beardless chin, and his cheek disfigured and discolored by a formidable scar. Ignorant of letters, of laws, and even of arms, he indulged in the supreme rank a more ample privilege of lust and drunkenness, and his brutal pleasures were either injurious to his subjects or disgraceful to himself. His savage temper was inflamed by passion, hardened by fear, and exasperated by resistance or reproach."—*Decline and Fall, Vol. IV, p.* 454. At length he was supplanted by another conspirator and punished by the same bloody violence through which he had risen to the throne. Of some forty successors, down to the year 1000, I find only one that shrunk from the shedding of human blood and other crimes peculiar

to monarchs. He was conspired against by the leaders of the army and quietly abdicated — declaring that not a drop of Christian blood should be shed in his behalf. Thenceforth for 32 years his home was a monastery far distant from the royal palace. A few others were tolerable rulers for their age, and the rest abominable wretches.

In western Europe the emperors and kings were perhaps more respectable on the whole, though some of them were moral monsters, guilty of manifold forms of iniquity. Yet they all claimed the Christian name and were reputedly zealous devotees of the church, observing its formalities and keeping its feasts with scrupulous care. Charlemagne, the most famous of them all, was sainted for what were deemed his personal merits and his services to the cause of Christ. The son of Pepin, king of the French, he rose from the princedom to which he was born to the dignity and power of an imperial Cæsar. As he was among the best of the professed Christian sovereigns we will give a brief historical sketch of his character and career, from which we can judge how near the others came to the standard of excellence and worth set up in the New Testament.

"On the festival of Christmas the last year of the eighth century, Charlemagne appeared in the church of St. Peter at Rome, and, to gratify the vanity of the city, he exchanged the simple dress of his country for the more showy habit of a patrician. After the celebration of the holy mysteries, Leo (the pope) suddenly placed a precious crown on

his head, and the dome resounded with the acclamations of the people, crying, 'Long life and victory to Charles, the most pious Augustus, crowned by God the great and pacific emperor of the Romans.' The head and body of Charlemagne were consecrated by the royal unction; after the example of the Cæsars, he was saluted and adored by the pontiff; his coronation oath represents a promise to maintain the faith and privileges of the church; and the first fruits were paid in rich offerings to the shrine of the apostle. * * * Without injustice to his fame, I may discern some blemishes in the sanctity and greatness of the restorer of the Western Empire. Of his moral virtues, chastity is not the most conspicuous; but the public happiness could not be materially injured by his nine wives or concubines, the various indulgence of meaner or more transient amours, the mutitude of his bastards whom he bestowed on the church. * * * I shall scarcely be permitted to accuse the ambition of a conqueror; but on the day of equal retribution, the sons of his brother, Carloman, the Merovingian princes of Aquitaine and the four thousand five hundred Saxons who were beheaded on the same spot, would have something to allege against the justice and humanity of Charlemagne."—*Decline and Fall, Vol. V, pp.* 43–5.

Such being the character of Charlemagne the saint, we can judge tolerably well what sort of Christian monarchs flourished in western Christendom during the seventh, eighth, and ninth centuries. It may be safely concluded, that, in general, they

practically trampled under foot every precept of Christ as they utterly ignored his example and committed many abominable vices in his name.

2. If we now inspect the lives of the professed ministers of religion during the same period, from pontiff and patriarch to the humblest priest and teacher, the picture is still darker — at least, if viewed in the light of their greater assumed sanctity. For they not only attached themselves closely to the civil rulers and shared the spoils of their official tyranny, but sanctified governmental wickedness and aped in the church the excesses and vices of the state. Dr. Mosheim says; "That corruption of manners which dishonored the clergy in the former century increased rather than diminished in this, and discovered itself under the most odious characters, both in the Eastern and Western provinces. In the East there arose the most violent dissensions and quarrels among the bishops and doctors of the church, who, forgetting the duties of their stations and the cause of Christ in which they were engaged, threw the state into combustion by their outrageous clamors and scandalous divisions, and even went so far as to stain their hands with the blood of their brethren who differed from them in opinion. In the western world, Christianity was not the less disgraced by the lives of those who pretended to be the luminaries of the church. * * * The clergy abandoned themselves to their passions without moderation or restraint. * * * Those who by their holy profession were appointed to proclaim to the world the vanity of

human grandeur and to inspire the minds of men by their instruction and example with a noble contempt of sublunary things, became themselves scandalous spectacles of worldly pomp, ambition, and splendor."— *Eccl. History, Eighth Century, Part II, Chap. 2.*

3. With such a clergy, what must be the morality of the laity and lower classes generally? Let the same historian answer; — "It is, indeed, amazing, that, notwithstanding the shocking nature of such vices, especially in a set of men whose profession required them to display to the world the attractive luster of virtuous example, and notwithstanding the perpetual troubles and complaints which these vices occasioned, the clergy were still thought worthy of the highest veneration, and were honored, as a sort of deities, by the submissive multitude. This veneration for the bishops and priests and the influence and authority it gave them over the people, were, indeed, carried much higher in the west than in the eastern provinces; and the reasons of this difference will apear manifest to such as consider the customs and manners that prevailed among the barbarous nations, which were at this time masters of Europe, before their conversion to Christianity. All these nations during their continuance under the darkness of paganism, were absolutely enslaved to their priests, without whose counsel and authority they transacted nothing of the least importance either in civil or military affairs. On their conversion to Christianity they therefore thought proper to transfer to the minis-

ters of their new religion the rights and privileges of their former priests. And the Christian bishops in their turn, were not only ready to accept the offers, but used all their diligence and dexterity to secure and assert to themselves and their successors the dominion and authority which the ministers of paganism had usurped over an ignorant and brutish people." — *Ib.*

It is unnecessary to multiply these historic testimonies, as they continue to be of the same import to the end of the ninth century. The corruption of primitive Christian morality, as well as piety, became utterly abhorrent till at length it reached the nethermost depths of depravity, the thick darkness of an ignorant, superstitious, intolerable, earthly inferno. If it could be boasted on the nominally triumphant side that Pagandom had been Christianized, it might be claimed on the other that Christendom had been Paganized.

And now friends, what shall we say of these things and how shall we profit by the glimpses we have caught of the appalling decline down which the Christian Church gradually backslid from the lofty and pure heights of personal righteousness on which Jesus and his first disciples stood and radiated light upon the world? Shall we keep ourselves in willing ignorance of the facts in the case? or shall we study diligently the annals of the religious past with a view of profiting by them? Note the condition of things in Christendom today. On the one side stand the lineal successors and representatives of these old paganized Christians, in church

and state, boasting of the sacred antiquity and even infallibility of an ecclesiastical organization that has for ages been wallowing in this mire of corruption, from which it is yet by no means delivered, and solemnly conjuring us to take refuge in its bosom as the only hope of salvation. On the other side, and at the utmost extreme, are the assumed apostles of progress, contemning or belittling every form or type of Christianity, even the primitive Christianity of the Gospels, claiming that it is of the same nature as all others — the puny seedling of baptized paganism — and that all must stand or fall together; that they are not worthy of the present age and should be abandoned. Another class there is, who make earnest protestations against the "Scarlet Beast," as they term the medieval church and its lineal successor, the Roman Catholic hierarchy of today, but who still hug many of her theological, pietistic, and moral corruptions as the original Gospel, and doom to perdition those who conscientiously and justly reject and disown them. Let us open our eyes to these things and judge of them both conscientiously and intelligently. Let us not be overawed by priestly assumption on the one hand, nor be hallucinated and led astray by the sophistries of an artful skepticism or the *ignis fatui* of a fruitless progressionism, on the other. Nor yet let us professedly cleave to the pure Christianity of the New Testament and at the same time blend with it doctrines, customs, and practices to which Jesus himself gave no countenance, — doctrines, customs, and practices born of

ignorance, superstition, and barbarism. Rather let us expend reasonable effort in getting all possible light upon the subject under discussion and then judge concerning it in both a good conscience and a good understanding.

When we read over or hear rehearsed the simple, grand precepts of the great Teacher, let us ponder them reverently, thoughtfully, and under a deep sense of responsibility to God. Let us search for the eternal divine principles on which they are based, the living, holy spirit with which they are animated, and the use, purpose, or end, to which they are to be applied in all human relations and transactions. Without this, they are of little value — empty platitudes or ineffective generalities. Professional formalists may, parrot-like, repeat them, zealous sentimentalists may praise them, and even unscrupulous pretenders may affect to reverence them; albeit to all such they are little more than "as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal." The preacher may cry out with impassioned voice that "Except a man be born again" and "become as a little child, he can in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven." But often to what purpose? This doctrine was taught and nominally believed all through the "Dark Ages" by pontiff, monarch, prelate and noble; by clergy and laity. But what meaning had it to any of them? Professing to be born again and to have entered upon a new life in Christ, they were the same slaves of pride, lust, and blood as before. Professing to have become as little children, innocent, gentle, teachable, they were vain,

haughty, ambitious, tyrannical. Professing to be the followers of Jesus in all things, they persistently and systematically repudiated his spirit, ignored his example, and violated his most sacred and authoritative injunctions and commands.

Moreover, such professions and such practices — such teachings and such lives did not begin and end in a day, or in a century, or with the "Dark Ages." Do they not exist to a deplorable extent in our own time? Listen to the ordained instructor and guide of the people in many a popular church, and to the people themselves. The minister repeats the golden rule, and the people say, amen. But does that rule govern them in their entire conduct towards their fellow-creatures? They all avow their belief in the second commandment. But do they really love their neighbor as they love themselves? regard his welfare as they do their own? seek his happiness as they seek to be happy? They recite together the precept, "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them who despitefully use you and persecute you." But do they live by it, as individuals, as members of society, as citizens of the town, state, and nation? Or do they cherish towards these several classes the spirit of ill-will, resentment, indignation, anger, hatred? Do they not often seek to injure, wrong, harm them, in body, mind, reputation, or estate; to have them made to suffer penal retribution — fines, imprisonment, death perhaps. Do they not in extreme cases all unite in unloosing the dogs of war and

in sending wholesale destruction among those who have in some way or other offended against them or against the general welfare and happiness? Eloquent and laudatory discourses do men preach upon the passages quoted, and upon all the heavenly precepts of humility, meekness, brotherly kindness, forgiveness, but how much real practical meaning do they find in them? Some of them about as much and about the same kind as did the popes, emperors, prelates, kings, nobles, and populace, in the days of the imperial saint Charlemagne; some of them a great deal more, to be sure, but alas! how few of them enough to purge them of "all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and evil speaking, with all malice?" How few enough to disarm them of all injurious and death-dealing force, of all penal and military compulsion and violence, and cause them to "beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning-hooks" and "to learn war no more?" The great mass still cling to the scepter and weapons of carnal strife and death as indispensable to human progress; aye, to Christian civilization. They rejoice to have escaped from medieval barbarism but still cling to its methods and practices; they congratulate themselves that they were not born and doomed to live in the "Dark Ages," but yet are quite willing to linger in the gloomy, deadly shades of such ages! Behold, then, the theoretical text and the practical commentary!

Much the same is true in regard to worldly ambition, desire for rank and station, lust for authority

and power. The Master's teaching upon this matter is very explicit and plain. When the mother of Zebedee's children came with her two sons to him, asking a high place for them in his kingdom — a wish in which they no doubt heartily concurred — he gave them a lesson of rebuke and instruction which ought to be remembered and heeded by all similar disciples to the end of time, "Ye know not what ye ask," he said. "The princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you. But whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant. Even as the son of man came not to be ministered unto but to minister and to give his life a ransom for many." — *Matt.* xx. 22, 25–28. And yet behold the scramble for positions of honor and emolument, for office and places of authority and power, in all grades of political and civil life, and often even in the church; professed disciples of the humble Jesus, "who made himself of no reputation and took upon him the form of a servant," joining in the tumult, and vieing with each other for some vacant place of honor or power, and a chance to feed at the public crib. How much is the spirit thus manifested like the unhallowed and vaulting ambition of those old princes and potentates, prelates and priests, of whom I have spoken, although operating, it is true, on a somewhat less cruel, bloody, and inhuman plane than their predecessors!

And then there are those other blessed precepts of primitive Christian morality scattered through the New Testament, against the inordinate love of money, covetousness, and all forms of mammonism which Christ declares to be hostile to the true service of God. These are frequently extolled and urged as the rightful rules of life with fulsome rhetoric and glowing enthusiasm, yet with little practical application and effect. The burning thirst for gold is not allayed, the eager strife for wealth, in which the multitudes take part, goes on, great riches are heaped up by the more shrewd, artful, unscrupulous few, while the many fail to a great extent in the fierce and unbrotherly competition — some, indeed, to share and enjoy a reasonable competency, but a large proportion to struggle on year after year in hopeless, unrelieved poverty. And then comes the conventional exhortation to the more successful to be generous with their wealth, to give liberally to the church and its institutions, in order that splendid edifices for worship may be built, an ornate ritual be kept up, and all the accompaniments of religion be refined and elegant, so as to attract the multitude and gain converts to Christ; as if such use of worldly means, without regard to the manner in which they were obtained, would satisfy the demands of true morality and win the favor of heaven? Does not this, too, seem much like the ways of the olden time, when large contributions to the treasury of the Lord were thought to atone for many crimes, save

the soul from purgatorial fires, and satisfy a righteous God?

Who will seriously ponder these things I again ask and be wise in regard to them? Who will find in them stimuli to a more faithful performance of duty; to a closer imitation of Christ; to a more perfect obedience to his commands and injunctions? And who pursuant thereto will take part in the work of a radical reform in the respects mentioned; in the work of bringing back the church to its primitive basis; so that its Personal Righteousness shall practically accord with that of its great Head and Exemplar?

DISCOURSE XXIV.

THE MORALITY OF CHRISTENDOM DURING THE TENTH, ELEVENTH, TWELFTH, AND THIRTEENTH CENTURIES.

"Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived." — 2 *Tim.* iii. 13.

"Many will say unto me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me ye that work iniquity." — *Matt.* vii. 22, 23.

The prophetic declarations embodied in these two texts of New Testament Scripture were strikingly fulfilled in the experience of men and nations bearthe name of Christ during the period passed in review in the last three discourses, extending from the middle of the second to the end of the ninth century. "Evil men and seducers" through all that darkening era did "wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived," and multitudes of ecclesiastics in the nominal Christian Church, of high and low degree, together with the great mass of professed believers in the anointed One of Nazareth, were going their prescribed round of ceremonial service and observing with punctilious care the manifold rites and ordinances of formal piety,

claiming to do "many wonderful works" as representatives of Christ and guardians of his cause, while steeped in iniquity and practicing the most disgusting, abhorrent, and deplorable immoralities. It would seem as if moral corruption and depravity could hardly reach a lower depth than that which widely prevailed at the opening of the tenth century. Scarcely a single distinguishing virtue of Primitive Christianity remained sacred in general practice, and the most exalted and sublime of those virtues were ruthlessly set at nought, trampled under foot, or reversed by the church itself, save in the case of a comparatively few obscure members. And this condition of things continued through the tenth, eleventh, twelfth, and thirteenth centuries — the period covered by the present discourse—becoming, if possible, more intense and malign, more appalling and calamitous, as time advanced, with little to alleviate the universal degradation and distress; with few indications of coming relief, and with scanty ground for hope, save only in the infinite mercy of God, that a better day was ever to dawn upon the world of mankind. Anti-Christianity had passed now far beyond its flowering season and was bringing forth its hateful fruits in abounding exuberance and profusion. This will appear most clearly as we go on with a hasty review of the period indicated, which will consist not so much in the details of individual, social, civil, ecclesiastical, moral, and religious life as in historical generalizations and summaries, with appropriate comments thereon.

1. And to begin with we will look once more at the clergy in their personal and official character, trying to follow them in their devious wanderings from the path of duty inculcated in the Sermon on the Mount and in the apostolic messages to the early churches. It was during the four hundred years under notice that their supreme head — the Papacy, so-called — made its most audacious and tyrannical assumptions, reached the climax of its usurped authority over church and state in Europe, and exhibited its most execrable depravities. The popes one after another asserted absolute and unconditioned majesty and dominion, temporal and spiritual, throughout Christendom, made and unmade kings and potentates at their pleasure, compelled those thus raised to power, even mighty monarchs, for trivial offences against them to crawl like reptiles in the dust before them, and perform the most servile and abject acts of penance at their footstool. At their bidding vast armies went forth to attack and destroy their Mohammedan and other enemies. When neither persuasion nor pious frauds would avail, they converted barbarians to the Christian faith by fire and sword. They sent their suppliant, blood-thirsty emissaries through all Europe to search out, hunt down, harass, subdue, and exterminate heretics of whatsoever sort that rose in protest against their theological decrees or their immoralities. They established the infamously horrible and sanguinary inquisition, with its complex enginery of torture and death. They opposed, fought against, supplanted, murdered each other in their mad strife

for the pontifical scepter. And not a few of them led lives of the most abandoned and shameless profligacy. Of those reigning in the tenth century, Dr. Mosheim says:

"The history of the Roman pontiffs who lived in this century is a history of so many monsters and not of men, and exhibits a horrible series of the most flagitious, tremendous and complicated crimes, as all writers, even those of the Romish communion, unanimously confess." "To those who consider the primitive dignity and the solemn nature of the ministerial character, the corruptions of the clergy must appear deplorable beyond all expression." "Both in the eastern and western provinces the clergy were, for the most part, composed of a most worthless set of men, shamefully illiterate and stupid, ignorant more especially in religious matters, equally enslaved to sensuality and superstition, and capable of the most abominable and flagitious deeds. This dismal degeneracy of the sacred order was, according to the most credible accounts, principally owing to the pretended chiefs and rulers of the universal church, who indulged in the commission of the most odious crimes, and abandoned themselves to the lawless impulse of the most licentious passions without reluctance or remorse; who confounded, in short, all difference between just and unjust to satisfy their impious ambition, and whose spiritual empire was such a diversified scene of iniquity and violence as never was exhibited under any of those temporal tyrants who have been the scourges of mankind."—*Eccl. Hist., Tenth Century, Part II, Chap.* 2.

When the celebrated historian comes to treat of the eleventh century, substantially the same statements are repeated; as they are in his representations of the two succeeding ones. To quote passages would be only to multiply testimonies similar in nature and character and to darken the picture into the gloom of moral midnight; a gloom relieved only by infrequent gleams of hope-reviving light. For which reason I pass to other phases of the subject in hand.

And now while the condition and character of the whole order of church officials, from the pope down to the humblest priest, was such as has been set forth, how was it with the laity of corresponding grades, from the monarch on his throne to the meanest vassal of his authority and will; from the princely noble rolling in wealth and luxury to the beggar of the street? What, in fact, must have been their moral and spiritual state? Much like that of their ecclesiastical superiors, "Like priest, like people." Where the acknowledged shepherd leads, the flock, as a general rule, follows. Worse than their reputed guides they could hardly have been, and less guilty and blameworthy, because of their oppressed condition and lack of opportunity for better things. With few exceptions they were lamentably ignorant, superstitious, degraded. The lower classes — the multitude — were mere slaves to the few, to those who held the reins of power and exercised arbitrary authority in both church and state. The chief ground of hope and source of relief to such was that their temporal and spir-

itual oppressors frequently quarrelled bitterly among themselves and contended with each other for the spoils of empire, and alternately favored their serfs and vassals through mutual spite and rivalry. Thus it was that the wronged and outraged obtained from time to time a portion of their inherent rights, or, at least, a measure of protection, as their superiors found it for their own advantage to grant the same. When, however, no such inducement existed, when there was no strife between opposing forces of tyranny, and all combined for purposes of usurpation and conquest — the temporal and spiritual working harmoniously for mutual aggrandizement and glory — then was there no check to the arrogance of those in authority, and the people at large were ground as grain between the upper and nether millstones of injustice and cruelty. And while the viceregants of Christ, bearing the insignia of the church and claiming to represent the majesty of heaven, were guilty of the immoralities and crimes just ascribed to them, it may safely be concluded that their subordinates in ecclesiastic affairs, from sovereigns and princes to the lowliest subject or slave, would feel justified in following their example. So it was, as the facts of history abundantly demonstrate. The water in a spring or conduit never rises higher than the fountain whence it flows.

2. It is to be noted as a result of the survey which we are prosecuting that striking illustrations of the prevailing depravity of the period in question, as well as of the ignorance, superstition, and

fanaticism that existed, are found in the practical working of the monastic system which had then risen to considerable importance in Christendom. This system, which is founded upon the idea of retiring from the ordinary affairs of the world and devoting one's self in seclusion to the contemplation, search after, and attainment of the things pertaining to the religious life, had been long existent when Christianity made its appearance among men, and it gained a place in the Christian church at a very early date. Though practiced chiefly by individuals for a while, it yet began to attract attention and gain a foothold as a mode of life, a social polity, or an institution, sometime in the third or fourth century, spreading thenceforth with great rapidity as time went on. Persons of great pietistic devotion and fervor deemed it their duty to withdraw wholly from worldly pursuits — from seeking after wealth, distinction, rank, pleasure, even to the renunciation of the marriage relation in some cases, and, under solemn vows, to take up their abode in solitary places, in mountain retreats or caves of the earth, and later in convents and monasteries, that they might there, disencumbered of all temporal cares and free from the temptations and snares of ordinary life, give themselves wholly to religious exercises, self-discipline, and communion with God. And if, as they felt might be the case, they should be called of divine providence to go out thence on missions of grace and salvation to the world at large, to do so under their own distinctive name and in a garb formally adopted as

the appropriate raiment of their order. Men thus devoted and consecrated were termed monks; and women, nuns.

In process of time and with the development of the system, differing modes of thought sprung up among its adherents, resulting in different forms of administration and in different schools of the same essential monastic idea, more or less independent of each other and yet constituting as a whole a common brotherhood. In process of time, too, the monastics, as they were termed, became numerous and influential. They were recognized as a power in general society — in church and state, and their aid was sought by rival parties in the management of both temporal and spiritual affairs. On the other hand they became at length conscious of their own importance and undertook to dictate to the reigning civil and ecclesiastical authorities and to control the concerns and the fortunes of the people at large. By their avowals of poverty, humility, and simplicity, and of lofty spirituality, and their outward display of these qualities, they gained the favor of the great mass of the population; while their steadfast allegiance to the church made them no less the favorites of the Papal court and its subordinates. Thus it came to pass that they not only formed a sort of connecting link or medium between the subject and ruling classes but were enabled to exercise, in a quiet unpretentious way, without any of the customary ensigns or displays of authority or strength, without crowns or coronets, battle-axes or spears, cohorts or

armies, a mighty influence in all human concerns, social, civil, ecclesiastical, both at Rome and throughout Christendom.

All this would have been well enough, would have been conducive to the order, virtue, welfare, and happiness of all classes and conditions of people and of the age, had these new elements of power —these monastic orders, been true to their professions; had they been the simple, unaffected, lowly, world-renouncing, pure-hearted, devout disciples of Christ they assumed to be. At first, they were, no doubt, such, to a large extent and in a marked degree. But the later devotees had departed widely from the standard set up by their progenitors, the founders of their system and its institutions. They had been beguiled by the same seductive arts that had lured other adherents of the church away from the simplicity of the Gospel, and were now wallowing in the mire of a common corruption; and they played their part in the drama of human life accordingly. Hear what my favorite historian says of them as they were in the eleventh century:

"All the writers of this age complain of the ignorance, licentiousness, frauds, debaucheries, and enormities that dishonored the greatest part of the monastic orders — not to mention the numerous marks of their profligacy and impiety that have come down to our own time. However astonished we may be at such horrid irregularities among a set of men whose destination was so sacred and whose profession was so austere, we shall be still more surprised to learn that this degenerate order, so far

from losing aught of their influence and credit on account of their licentiousness, were promoted, on the contrary, to the highest ecclesiastical dignities and beheld their opulence and authority increasing from day to day. Our surprise will be diminished when we consider the gross ignorance and superstition, and the unbounded licentiousness and corruption of manners that reigned in this century among all ranks and orders of men." — *Eccl. Hist. Eleventh Century, Part II, Chap.* 2.

It appears, however, that this fearful depravity was not universal and total among these monks and their confreres, but that reformations were occasionally attempted by them with considerable success, and that, when old establishments under their rule became too rotten for hope of bettering, new ones were founded and made subject to a more rigid and thorough discipline; though these also frequently became perverted into cesspools of depravity by worldly prosperity, ambition, aggrandizement, and carnal indulgence of various sort.

Of one of these efforts among the disciples of monasticism to restore the lost estate of the order and re-establish its primitive purity of thought and conduct, made in the thirteenth century, our historian writes thus:

"The religious society that surpassed all the rest in purity of manners, extent of fame, number of privileges, and multitude of members, was that of the *Mendicants*, or begging friars, whose order was first established in this century, and who, by the tenor of their institution, were to remain entirely

destitute of all fixed revenues and possessions. The present state and circumstances of the church rendered the establishment of such an order indispensably necessary. The monastic orders who wallowed in opulence were by the corrupting influence of their ample possessions lulled in a luxurious indolence. They lost sight of all their religious obligations, trampled upon the authority of their superiors, suffered heresy to triumph unrestrained and the sectaries to form various assemblies; in short, they were incapable of promoting the true interests of the Church, and abandoned themselves without either shame or remorse to all sorts of crimes." — *Ib. Part II, Chap* 2.

These sects which rose up now and then with loud protests against reigning abuses and corruptions were really the reformers of those days, standing out bravely for a moral excellence and strictness of life in striking contrast with what existed around them in all departments of society. They each and all did a good work for a time, but were often prone to fanatical extravagances and, even with growing popularity and influence, to reprehensible excesses, becoming themselves in their turn "a burden not only to the people but to the Church itself," and needing themselves to be reformed and molded anew after the pattern given in the New Testament. So much for the monks, their original purity, their utility, their decadence and supersedure —their providential place in the Church universal and in the progressive history of mankind.

3. No review of the centuries brought to notice in this discourse would be complete or reasonably satisfactory without mention, brief though it may be, of the Holy Wars which so emphatically distinguished them; the Crusades, as they are called in general history. The Mohammedans, followers of the wonderful prophet of the seventh century whose name they bear, were masters of nearly all those portions of Asia and Africa in which Christianity was first preached and for several hundred years nominally prevailed. They had obtained a foothold in Europe and were threatening the decaying Greek empire and that portion of the Church resident within its boundaries, though held in check by the so-called Christians of western and northern Europe. But the birthplace of Christ and Jerusalem were firm in their sacrilegious grasp, and thousands of pilgrims to the places made sacred by the labors and sacrifices of their Lord and his early disciples every year, were subject to insult and outrage at their hands. This was a cause of increasing irritation and offense, generating a demand for a re-conquest of the Holy Land and the expulsion of the unsanctified invaders from its territory. The Popes took the matter in hand and the potentates of all Christendom gave it their sanction. Under the preaching of Peter the Hermit, a fanatical monk who assumed championship of the movement for the redemption of Palestine, going through Europe urging the claims of his cause and calling for recruits to enlist under the banner of the cross, for the accomplishment of the end in view, the

great majority of the people of every rank and calling in life were roused to an intensity of feeling amounting almost to madness. Armies were marshalled into service and sent beyond the Bosphorus to engage in the conflict with the indomitable, blood-thirsty Saracen, who, by force and arms, had centuries before gained possession there. A succession of campaigns, attended with the vacillating fortunes of success and failure, of victory and defeat; a series of gigantic wars or Crusades, eight in number, extending through two centuries and involving the lives of millions of men and untold financial resources, was inaugurated and carried forward to a final issue of discomfiture and overthrow to the Christian cause.

The adventurers who engaged in these miscalled holy undertakings were for the most part men without principle or honor, capable and guilty of many a form of iniquity. The first division of the army raised by Peter the Hermit committed the most horrible crimes in passing through Hungary and Bulgaria, then Pagan provinces, which so incensed the people that they rose up in arms against the miscreants and massacred multitudes of them; and subsequent divisions indulging in similar outrages met a similar fate. During the progress of these numerous expeditions not only were the common soldiery gathered from the middle and lower ranks of life guilty of acts becoming an unprincipled band of robbers and assassins, but bishops and abbots, priests and monks, girded with the spear and battle-axe, acting as chaplains, commanders, or as mem-

bers of the rank and file of the army, "threw off all restraint, led the most lawless and profligate lives, and abandoned themselves to all sorts of licentiousness, committing the most flagrant and extravagant excesses without reluctance or remorse." Such was the character of those who rushed to arms for the overthrow of the usurping and unbaptized Mussleman and for the rescue from his polluted hands the birthplace and sepulcher of their acknowledged Lord! And thus did they shew forth their loyalty to him and His Gospel by utterly ignoring his teachings and ruthlessly trampling his most sacred precepts and principles under foot!

4. It will further illustrate my present subject of discourse to speak of another monstrous immorality of the period under review, to wit: The assumption on the part of the priesthood of the power of granting what was termed absolution from sin; that is, the power, by reason of their office, of granting pardon for any and all trangressions of God's law, and of securing the remission of all penalty for wrong-doing, for such considerations as they at their pleasure might propose and require. Love of lucre and the necessities of war seem to have been for a time the most weighty motives animating the breast of prelates in the exercise of this assumed prerogative. Thus were they enabled to become immensely rich or to obtain supplies for the purpose of repelling invading hosts, making conquests over foreign foes, or gaining foreign territory. A price was fixed for each particular exercise of this pretended power according to the turpitude

of the committed sin; the more flagrant crimes requiring a large sum of money, and mere venial offences a proportionally smaller one. As the people of those days from king to beggar lived in perpetual fear of an endless hell of torture and misery, or, at least, of agonizing purgatorial fires for an indefinite period of duration, they were each and all easily made the prey of these pious swindlers, who played upon their fears as a means of obtaining money from them; most persons being quite willing to give what was demanded of them in order to escape the flames of either place of threatened pain and woe.

Moreover, it was not alone for immunity from the punishment due to sins already committed that payment could be made, but to those contemplated — yet to be committed. And when applied to cases of the latter sort, the purchased favors took the name of indulgences, and these in process of time, came to be articles of common traffic, as they continue to be to this day in some form or other, in certain departments of the church and in various countries of Christendom. Thus it was that, by the granting of absolution for past iniquities, and the sale of indulgences for future ones, the ecclesiastics of that day secured to themselves such munificent revenues as no heathen priesthood ever dreamed of or hoped to acquire; to be devoted to purposes of personal accumulation or advancement, of church extension or adornment, of heretical suppression or persecution, or of territorial conquest and expansion, as might respectively

please them. Sometimes these favors were dispensed to secure recruits to the army, and men were induced to go forth to battle with the enemies of the state or with infidels to the church under the ostensible guaranty of exemption from the consequences of all previous wrong-doing and of all which they might thereafter be guilty of at the bar of a righteous God. Could infernal ingenuity devise a more impious and effective way of perpetuating the reign of wickedness among men or of preventing the coming of the divine kingdom on the earth?!

5. In conclusion I can but refer briefly to that mighty engine of cruelty and torture and death — the Inquisition, which was established in the thirteenth century by a Pope bearing the most inappropriate name of Innocent III. Its avowed object was the suppression of heresy and it had plenty of work to do in that line though with little effect. The corruption and depravity that had gained so large a place in the Church had become so outrageous and intolerable as to rouse whatever of moral vitality was latent in it to a resolute protest and to a re-assertion of the principles of Primitive Christianity and of the duties enjoined therein, whenever an opportunity of doing so occurred with any hope of doing good, even at the risk of threatened tortures and ultimate martyrdom. No doubt some of these protestants were great errorists in doctrine and perhaps in practice. But good, bad, or indifferent, they were all regarded as rebels against both civil and ecclesiastical authority and

as dangerous heretics, to be subdued or exterminated. And this was undertaken with a firm, relentless, bloody hand; the so-called Holy Inquisition with its manifold horrors being invoked to secure that end. All Europe was scoured by hersey-hunters, who brought their victims, when found, to this inhuman institution, where they were put to the rack or subjected to other tortures such as human fiends only could invent in order to make them recant; refusing to do which, as was not infrequently the case, they were put to a most cruel and agonizing death. And all this inhumanity was practiced in the name of that Christ who taught his followers to live together as brethren, to do to others as they would have others do to them, and to love their enemies, bless those that curse them and do good to those that despitefully use them and persecute them; who, by word and deed, by precept and example, condemned and prohibited not only all proscription and persecution for opinion's sake, but all intentional injury to any human being even to the worst of foes. How hath the cause of pure and undefiled religion been dishonored and harmed by such outrages on the part of its avowed disciples!

DISCOURSE XXV.

THE MORAL CONDITION OF CHRISTENDOM DURING THE FOURTEENTH, FIFTEENTH, AND SIXTEENTH CENTURIES.

"Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evil doers, children that are corrupters. Thy princes are rebellious and companions of thieves; every one loveth gifts and followeth after rewards; they judge not the fatherless neither doth the cause of the widow come unto them." — *Isa.* i. 4, 23.

The present discourse resumes the moral survey of Christendom at the historical point where the last one left it — the close of the thirteenth century — and continues it through the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth centuries — an era of still deeply prevailing darkness, though relieved by encouraging gleams of light, by some promise of coming day. We have groped our way along devious paths, through perhaps the gloomiest period of the medieval ages, and peered into some of the lowest abysses of demoralization into which the apostate and degenerate church ever descended; but we have still horrible manifestations of vice and cruelty, of debauchery and excess to take note of and expose to view; mostly, however, as legitimate outgrowths or results of pre-existing depravity and corruption rather than fresh developments of

iniquity and guilt. We have found that every distinguishing principle, precept, and peculiarity of the Christian gospel had been either grossly neglected, perverted, or set at defiance, not only by the more ignorant and inconspicuous masses of the people but by their confessed superiors in the church as well as in the state. While this condition of things continued to a large and lamentable extent in the three hundred years designated, there happily appeared during this period auspicious signs of reformation in different localities, or, at least, of counteraction — faint indications of a change for the better, of the dawn of a new morning upon the world. I will prelude what it becomes me to say concerning the corruptions of Christianity that still prevailed with a brief rehearsal of the more important of these signs of promise.

1. I begin by chronicling the fact of the revival of learning as one of the first of them; one that aided greatly in dispelling the shades of ignorance and in awakening in the minds of men a love of truth and liberty. Previous to the opening of the fourteenth century schools of considerable importance had been established in some of the larger cities of western and northern Europe; crude indeed but valuable both in the work they accomplished and in preparing the way for something better in their line which was soon to come. During the period in review educational institutions multiplied rapidly, several of them later on becoming renowned universities. Through their influence not only were many young men trained in the rudiments and

principles of science, literature, philosophy, art, and morals, but a desire for knowledge was awakened in the public mind, thought was stimulated, the spirit of inquiry went abroad, ancient books were sought after and read and new ones were written, while the art of printing, invented in the fifteenth century, gave a fresh impulse to the rising intelligence of the masses of people and funished vastly increased facilities for promoting it. Thenceforth there was rapidly advancing light upon all important human interests and concerns, and the myrmidons of ignorance, superstition, and wickedness, of high and low degree, were held in check or made to recoil and slink away from their former ostentatious displays of usurpation and tyrannical power.

2. With the increase of knowledge and a corresponding mental activity and desire for truth, to which was added a freshly aroused moral impulse, dissenters, protestants, reformers sprang up and multiplied in all parts of Christendom. Heretical sects and parties became more numerous, many of which were made up of wild fanatics and impracticable irrational zealots of little account as moral and regenerating forces in the world, while others of a different type proved of immense service to the cause of Christ and to humanity — architects were they of a new era to the world. Among the most notable and worthy of these were the Waldenses, as they were termed, who stood for radical reform in the church and a rehabilitation of Primitive Christianity in the creeds and lives of men. These many heresiarchs, and especially the more rational, reformatory,

and Christian of them — the Waldenses and those of similar character — were subjected to the most cruel persecutions from the Papal authorities and their subordinates, hunted as they were like wild beasts and driven from their homes, and taking refuge in dense forests, in caves of the earth, and in wild mountain retreats, from the violence and fury of their blood-thirsty pursuers. Nevertheless, they could not be silenced or exterminated. The more they were outraged and maltreated, the more was their spirit diffused abroad among the nations; the more did hostility to the assumptions of the Papacy and to the enormities and corruptions of the Church increase; the more did heretical dissenters and reformers abound. Wickliffe in England appealed from the authority of the Pope to the Bible, considerable portions of which he translated into his native tongue and distributed among the people, causing great commotion and gaining for himself a multitude of adherents. John Huss and Jerome of Prague filled Bohemia with their powerful protests against the Romish hierarchy and sowed broadcast the seedgrain of a larger faith and a better life throughout central Europe, for which they were made to suffer martyrdom at the stake. The learned Erasmus of Rotterdam, "the morning star of the Reformation," shed the mild beams of a renovated Christianity along the shores and beyond the waters of the North Sea. And then in due time came Martin Luther, John Calvin, Melancthon, Zwinglius, Servetus, and their indomitable coagitators, taking the field in a truly holy

warfare with the powers of darkness reigning at Rome and with spiritual wickedness in all departments of the Church, thus inaugurating and carrying forward to a successful issue a revolution that made the sixteenth century memorable in both the civil and religious history of the human race.

3. Another important cause contributing to the same beneficent result was an open disruption in the fourteenth century between the Papal power and several temporal monarchs, particularly those of France and Germany, whose jurisdictions had previously been tamely submissive and tributary thereto. The supreme head of the Church, Boniface VIII, urged with insolent determination his claim to absolute control of civil as well as ecclesiastical affairs in all countries acknowledging allegiance to him. This was denied most emphatically by Philip the Fair, king of France, who resolutely maintained his own sovereign prerogatives, and who soon "convinced Europe that it was possible to set bounds to the overgrown arrogance of the bishop of Rome, though many crowned heads had attempted it without success." To this monarch it seemed to have been left to fight the battle that ensued upon the issue thus raised, not in his own behalf alone but for the other temporal rulers who were in sympathy with him. A very pointed and bitter correspondence was carried on at the outset between Boniface and Philip, and this ultimated in a sentence of excommunication from the Papal chair against the king and all his adherents. Whereupon

Philip was very angry, and, after consulting and being assured of the support of his courtiers and nobles, sent a secret embassy to Italy for the purpose of raising a sedition there which should result in seizing his pontificial antagonist and bringing him to Lyons. The project so far succeeded as to gain possession of the person of Boniface, but before he could be taken to France the excited populace recaptured him, conducted him back to Rome, where he soon after died; in consequence, it is said, of the violent treatment he received at the hands of his antagonists. It was a bad piece of business, but it settled forever the question of the absolute supremacy of His Holiness in concerns of state, and so helped the cause of religious liberty and the ultimate reformation of the prevailing ecclesiasticism of the age.

4. This wholesome resistance to papal domination was followed by another event of no less consequence, of which it was perhaps a contributory cause. I refer to a violent rivalry which ere long sprung up between ambitious candidates for the pontifical throne and which resulted in the election of two or three hostile popes by different factions of the cardinalate — the schism thus created weakening to a very marked extent the hitherto exercised authority and power of the papacy and hastening the advent of a better era to the church and world. Of this matter Mosheim says:— "This dissension was fomented with such dreadful success and arose to such a shameful height that for fifty years the church had two or three different heads

at the same time, each of the contending popes forming plots and thundering anathemas against their competitors. The distress and calamity of those times are beyond all power of description; for not to insist upon the perpetual contentions and wars between the factions of the several popes, by which multitudes lost their fortunes and their lives, all sense of religion was extinguished in most places and profligacy rose to a scandalous excess. The clergy, while they vehemently contended which of the inimical popes ought to be deemed the true successor of Christ, were so excessively corrupt as to be no longer studious to keep up even an appearance of religion or decency; and, in consequence of all this, many plain well meaning people were overwhelmed with doubt and plunged into the deepest mental distress. Nevertheless these abuses were by their consequences greatly conducive both to the civil and religious interests of mankind; for by these dissensions the Papal power received an incurable wound, and kings and princes who had formerly been the slaves of the lordly pontiffs now became their judges and masters, and many of the least stupid among the people had the courage to disregard and despise the popes on account of their vicious disputes about dominion, to commit their salvation to God alone, and to admit as a maxim that the prosperity of the church might be maintained and the interests of religion secured and promoted without a visible head crowned with a spiritual supremacy." — *Eccl Hist. Century XIV, Part II, Chap.* 2. So it may be that

next to truth and righteousness a rotten ripeness of error and wickedness may open the eyes of honest people and impel them to demand and proceed to inaugurate a radical reformation.

5. In the same way too, it may be remarked, the fearful persecutions with which all classes of dissentients and reformers were visited, including the horrors of the Inquisition, had a tendency to further the same desirable end. Thousands and tens of thousands — untold myriads of people innocent of crime, were plundered, driven from their homes, made the prey of mercenary and bloodthirsty marauders clothed with the robes of office, wounded, imprisoned, slaughtered outright, or made to suffer a lingering death by indescribable tortures, for the sole reason that they would not confess the established faith, acknowledge the papal supremacy, and bow submissive to ursurped power — because they differed from their superiors in office upon religious themes, dared to think for themselves in loyalty to truth and duty, and to speak the word that conscience required them to speak. Such atrocities at length aroused the slumbering moral sense of intelligent, highminded people, causing a reaction which served to check the violence and madness of their perpetrators, and to produce a most salutary and humanizing effect upon the public mind; thus tending to purify the theology, the morality, and the life of Christendom. So it was then, as in many other instances under the overruling providence of God, that the blood of the martyrs became the seed of the church — of an

improved and greatly transformed church, if not of a wholly regenerate and Christian one.

But what was the actual moral condition of the nominal Christian world during the centuries now in review? Alas. that we are obliged to confess it to have been, as already intimated, sadly low and corrupt. The favorable occurrences to which I have referred were but incidents in the history of the period, ripples in the tide of affairs, flashes of light in the midst of generally prevailing darkness, fore-gleams of a day the dawn of which was still in the future awaiting the progress of time and the workings of Him in whose hands are all human fortunes and destinies. This is what Mosheim says of this matter: — "The most eminent writers of this (the fifteenth) century unanimously lament the miserable condition to which the Christian church was reduced by the corruption of its ministers and which seemed to portend nothing less than its total ruin, if Providence should not interfere, by extraordinary means for its deliverance and preservation. The vices that reigned among the Roman pontiffs and indeed among all ecclesiastical orders were so flagrant that the complaints of these good men did not appear at all exaggerated or their apprehensions ill-founded; nor had any of the corrupt advocates of the clergy the courage to call them to account for the sharpness of their censures and of their complaints. The rulers of the church, who lived in luxurious indolence and in the infamous practice of all kinds of vice, were even obliged to hear with a placid countenance and even to com-

mend these bold censors who declaimed against the degeneracy of the church, declared that there was scarcely anything sound either in its head or in its members, and demanded the aid of the secular arm and the destroying sword to lop off the parts that were infected with this grievous and deplorable contagion." — *Eccl. Hist. Fifteenth Century, Part II, Chap.* 2.

The distinguished and trustworthy D'Aubigne, author of the History of the Reformation, testifies essentially to the same effect, as follows:— "Doubtless the corruption was not universal; justice requires that this should not be forgotten. The Reformation elicited many shining instances of piety, righteousness and strength of mind." "If in these our days any one were to collect the immoralities and degrading vices that are committed in any single country, such a mass of corruption would doubtless be enough to shock every mind. But the evil at the period we speak of bore a character and universality that it has not borne at any subsequent date, and, above all, the abomination stood in the holy places which it has not been permitted to do since the Reformation." "The proclamation and sale of indulgences powerfully stimulate an ignorant people to immorality." "The venders of indulgences were naturally tempted to further the sale of their merchandize by presenting them to the people under the most attractive and seducing aspect." "All that the multitude saw in them was a permission to sin; and the sellers were in no haste to remove an impression so favorable to the sale."

"The priests were the first who felt the effects of this corrupting influence. Desirous to exalt themselves they had sunk themselves lower. Infatuated men! They aimed to rob God of a ray of his glory and to place it on their own brow; but their attempt had failed and they had received only a leaven of corruption from the power of evil. The annals of the age swarm with scandals. In many places the people were well pleased that the priest should have a woman in keeping, in order that their wives might be safe from his seductions. What scenes of humiliation were witnessed in the house of the pastor. The wretched man supported the mother and her children with the tithe and the offering; his conscience was troubled; he blushed in the presence of his people, of his servants, and before God. The mother fearing to come to want when the priest should die provided against it beforehand and robbed the house. Her character was gone; her children were a living accusation of her. Treated on all sides with contempt, they plunged into brawls and debaucheries. Such was the family of the priest. These horrid scenes were a kind of instruction the people were ready enough to follow."

"The higher orders of the hierarchy were equally corrupt. Dignitaries of the Church preferred the tumult of the camp to the service of the altar. To be able, lance in hand, to compel his neighbors to do him homage, was one of the most conspicuous qualifications of a bishop. Baldwin, archbishop of Treves, was constantly at war with his neighbors and vassals; razing their castles, building fortresses

of his own, and thinking only how to enlarge his territory. A certain bishop of Eichstadt, when dispensing justice, wore under his habit a coat of mail and held in his hand a long sword. He used to say he did not fear five Bavarians provided they would attack him in the open field. Everywhere the bishops were engaged in constant war with the towns; the citizens demanding freedom and the bishops requiring implicit obedience. If the latter triumphed they punished the revolters by sacrificing numerous victims to their vengeance; but the flame of insurrection broke out again at the very moment when it was thought to be extinguished."

"And what a spectacle was presented by the Pontifical throne in the generation immediately preceding the Reformation! Rome, it must be acknowledged, has seldom been witness to so much infamy. Roderigo Borgia, after living in illicit intercourse with a Roman lady, had continued a similar connection with one of her daughters, by name Rosa Vanozza, by whom he had five children. He was living at Rome with Vanozza and other abandoned women, and, as cardinal and archbishop, visiting the churches and hospitals, when the death of Innocent VIII created a vacancy in the pontifical chair. He succeeded in obtaining it by bribing each of the cardinals at a stipulated price. Four mules laden with silver were publicly driven into the palace of Sforza, the most influential of the cardinals. Borgia became Pope under the name of Alexander VI, and rejoiced in the attainment of the pinnacle of pleasures."

"The very day of his coronation he created his son Cæsar, a ferocious and dissolute youth, archbishop of Valencia and bishop of Pampeluna. He next proceded to celebrate in the Vatican the nuptials of his daughter, Lucrezia, by festivities, at which his mistress, Julia Bella, was present, and which were enlivened by farces and indecent songs. 'Most of the ecclesiastics,' says an historian, 'had their mistresses, and all the convents of the capital were houses of ill-fame.' Cæsar Borgia espoused the cause of the Guelphs, and when by their assistance he had annihilated the power of the Ghibe lines he turned upon the Guelphs and crushed them in their turn. But he would allow none to share in the spoils of his atrocities."

"Alexander had a favorite named Peroto whose preferment offended the young duke. (Cæsar having been honored with the duchy of Valentinois by Louis XII, king of France, as a condition upon which a divorce from his wife was granted him by the Pope.) Cæsar rushed upon Peroto who sought refuge under the Papal mantle, clasping the Pontiff in his arms. Cæsar stabbed him and the blood of the victim spirted into the Pontiff's face. 'The Pope,' adds a contemporary and a witness of these atrocities, 'loves the duke, his son, and lives in great fear of him.'"

"Cæsar was one of the handsomest as he was one of the most powerful men of his age. Six wild bulls fell beneath his hand in single combat. Nightly assassinations took place in the streets of Rome. Poison often destroyed those whom the

dagger could not reach. Every one feared to move or breathe least he should be the next victim. Cæsar Borgia was the hero of crime. The spot on earth where all iniquity met and overflowed was the Pontiff's seat. When man has given himself over to the power of evil, the higher his pretensions before God the lower he is seen to sink in the depths of hell. The dissolute entertainments given by the Pope, his son Cæsar, and his daughter Lucrezia, were such as can neither be described nor thought of. The most impure groves of ancient worship saw not the like." At length "the Pope, in order to rid himself of a wealthy cardinal, had prepared poison in a small box of sweetmeats which was to be placed upon the table after a sumptuous feast. The cardinal receiving a hint of the design gained over the attendant and the poisoned box was placed before Alexander. He ate of it and perished. The whole city came together and could hardly satiate themselves with the sight of this dead viper. Such was the man who filled the pontifical throne at the commencement of the age of the Reformation." HISTORY OF THE GREAT REFORMATION, *the four volumes complete in one.—pp.* 24–27.

We have now reached the climax of medieval iniquity and corruption. There were no lower depths apparently of moral degradation and shamelessness into which men and nations could plunge; into which the nominal Church of Christ could sink. For all this existed in Christendom — it was found in the high as well as in the low places of the religious world — in the metropolis of that great

empire which gloried in the name of the crucified; which claimed allegiance to the divine man of the New Testament, and professed to be the especial guardian and representative of his cause and kingdom on the earth! And yet his commanding morality was utterly reversed and his holiest injunctions were lost in the cesspools of the foulest criminality. No wonder that a reaction came. No wonder that outraged and dishonored human nature was moved to protest and revolt; no wonder that the moral sense of the better portion of the people cried out for a reform; no wonder that God raised up and sent forth new prophets of truth and righteousness, to call men to repentance and a better life; "to lift up their voices like a trumpet and show his people their trangressions and the house of Jacob their sins."

And so the great Protestant Reformation, by a mighty uprising of the human soul against unparalleled wickedness and shame, by the demand of the awakened conscience of men for greater fidelity to Christ, and by the power of the Holy Spirit working in and through human instrumentality, was inaugurated and launched upon the tide of advancing time. Foregleams of it had appeared in England under Wickliffe in 1360, and more vividly under Huss, Jerome, and others in the following century. But it did not arise in its strength until Luther and Melancthon in Germany, Zuinglius in Switzerland, Calvin in France, and others in other countries appeared during the sixteenth century and made it a power of redemption in the world. Of

its results and the extent to which it restored Christianity to its primitive purity and simplicity and brought the church back to the Master, I will speak in subsequent discourses.

DISCOURSE XXVI.

THE AVERAGE MORALITY OF CHRISTENDOM IN THE SEVENTEETH AND EIGHTEENTH CENTURIES.

"And I will turn my hand upon thee and purely purge away thy dross, and take away all thy tin. And I will restore thy judges as at the first, and thy counsellors as at the beginning: Afterward thou shalt be called, The city of righteousness, the faithful city." — *Isa.* i. 25, 26.

The prophetic announcement of this text has not yet been fulfilled. The happy consummation it heralds is still far in the future, though the corrective process which shall ultimately achieve it began with what is termed in history *The Reformation.* The sixteenth century saw that great movement successfully inaugurated and started on its way to final victory. It was regarded with varying emotions and received diversified treatment from the thoughtful, religious public of that day. Its enemies hated, contemned, and even ridiculed it, while its friends admired, revered, panegyrized it; and so it has been to the present moment. The truth concerning it lies between the two estimates thus indicated and expressed. It was not altogether worthy of approval and commendation, nor did it deserve wholesale and undiscriminating reprobation. It had in it great good and great promise of good

to the cause of truth and to humanity; it also had serious defects and shortcomings. All this seems natural and probable when we reflect upon the intellectual, moral, social, and political state of Europe at the time the agitation which produced that remarkable upheaval broke out, and remember that the elements entering into it were for the most part gross, crude, egotistic, and turbulent even, as well as religiously zealous and passionate, without much truly Christian circumspection and scrupulosity. This leaves room for instances of exceptional moral and spiritual excellence in the case of individuals and small select classes or sects, as they might be termed. But the influence of these well-balanced, truly regenerate minds and hearts was but as a whisper in the midst of a tornado. The great leaders of the age, ecclesiastical, political, philosophical, military, were "bulls of Bashan" or "rams of Nabaioth." The conflicts that arose between them were wars of the giants, the issues of which were nearly all determined in the last resort either by the sword or by the pen of diplomacy dipped in human gore. But what were the principal elements entering into and concurrently producing the mighty movement known as *The Reformation*?

1. A large number of honest, conscientious, earnest, men and women, utterly disgusted and aggrieved at the gross immorality of the Roman hierarchy in all grades of rank and station. Whoever exposed and denounced that immorality openly and uncompromisingly was hailed by all such as a

God-sent messenger of redemption. The same class of persons were ready to applaud and echo all bold anathemas against the Papistic superstitions concerning purgatory, relic-worship, masses for the dead, absolution of sin, indulgences, etc. This element produced a most salutary effect upon the Roman communion, compelling it to adopt so much of external reform as should stop the mouths of accusers and insure greater public respect. Its moral standing was thus greatly improved, and it has ever since been growing more and more circumspect, giving the larger Protestant sects decreasing ground or occasion for boasting over it.

2. Theological dogmatists, able, ambitious, combative, and indomitable, such as Luther, Calvin, Knox, and many like-spirited co-adjutors, constituted a powerful element in promoting the Reformation. These dogmatists were undoubtedly conscientious, had a profound horror of the Papal usurpations, superstitions, and immoralities, and heroically assailed what they deemed false and wicked. But they have left on record too many proofs of their own popish spirit towards all dissenters from their own authority, however sincere and upright, to command our highest admiration. They insisted on the supremacy of the Scriptures over all ecclesiastical decrees and traditions, but they must be allowed to interpret those Scriptures, and woe to him who called their interpretations in question. They stood manfully for the right of private judgment, as against Pope, prelate, and council, but deemed it rash, impudent, and blameworthy, for others to question

or reject their decisions. They abhorred the Romish Inquisition, but set up petty ones of their own. They deprecated persecution for opinion's sake, but deemed it proper to suppress heresy against the the dogmas they themselves avowed, not always by mild and harmless means. They detested the Papal reliance upon secular agencies to maintain decrees issued professedly in the interest of public order, yet they married their Protestantism to the civil and military authority, and trusted to its arm of violence and bloodshed for protection to themselves and their church. All this was natural considering the times, their education, and environing circumstances. They did their work, all things considered, quite as well as could have been expected. But their encomiasts claim more for their wisdom and virtue than justice warrants or I can accord.

3. King Henry VIII of England played an important part in this momentous drama. At the opening of the Reformation, he, as a loyal Papist, wrote against Luther in defence of the dominant ecclesiasticism; for which the Pope conferred on him and his successors the title of "Defender of the Faith." But he was a man of inordinate self-will, sensuality, and ambition, as he was of pitiless cruelty. He was six times married, putting away one wife after another, either by divorce or more violent and murderous methods, to gratify his fancy, his lust, or his vanity. When the Pope refused to sanction the separation from his first wife, Catharine of Aragon, for no fault of hers, he renounced allegiance to the Romish potentate, declared England

to be a Protestant country, and made himself the head of the national church — pope of England, in fact. Though he was himself an unprincipled tyrant, yet his break with Rome, no doubt, furnished many conscientious, noble reformers among his subjects an opportunity to do a great and blessed work for God and humanity, and bring in a better day to the Anglican communion and to all classes of people. Base and unworthy of commendation and eulogy as he was, he must yet be recognized as a factor, under divine providence, in producing the change in human history and in the Christian church wrought by the sixteenth century revolution.

4. Kingcraft was another element or factor of the problem under notice. Like other crafts of a like nature it was subtle, artful. argus-eyed for its own advantage; successful by shrewdness and intrigue to preserve and, if possible, increase power. It was jealous of rivals, resisted the aspiration of dependents, and missed no opportunity to humiliate old enemies. Europe was divided into numerous sovereignties and princedoms, having their respective rulers, who vied with each other for supremacy, maintained their special prerogatives, and frequently profited by each others follies and misfortunes. They were ready to use religion, though caring little for it, to promote their own interests and secure some ambitious end. In the general issue between Romanism and Protestantism they were each and all ready to favor whichever side they could make subservient to their own purpose, and so helped

to keep alive and intensify the agitation which contributed so largely to the success of the movement which had in it much of promise to the church and world.

5. But back of and underneath these more outward activities, these essentially worldly auxiliaries to the cause of reform, there was undoubtedly a profound and noble moral and spiritual purpose employed, giving character to the movement and clothing it with invincible strength — a true love of religious liberty, of righteousness, of progress, coupled with and inspired by an unwavering faith in God and in the verities of the eternal life. This fact should receive recognition and full credit; for without it, the agitation would have spent itself in vain; the Reformation would have died away in emptiness and imbecility. It prospered, it went on conquering and to conquer, because God was in it; because men inspired of the Holy Spirit, speaking and acting from a deep sense of personal responsibility and in harmony with the laws of divine order, were its promoters, its champions, its masters. But this element, though so important, so essential indeed, may be overestimated — has been overestimated by enthusiastic partisan laudators of the work done, being regarded as the chief if not the only agency by which it was accomplished. But I am persuaded that it did not play so vital a part as its panegyrists would have us believe. A mixture of motive prompted and animated the movement; good and evil, disinterestedness and self-seeking ambition, devotion to God and worldly

interest were strangely intermingled in the evolutionary processes out of whose seething turbulence and convulsions the final beneficent results came.

And now let us consider briefly the average moral status of Christendom during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. It has been partially indicated and illustrated in what I have already said but requires more specific and definite elucidation. Undoubtedly it was better than for hundreds of years before. The signs of promise which had previously appeared in the sky of time, as noted in my last discourse, were by no means illusory and vain. A marked gain in certain directions over formerly existing conditions had been made and changes for the better in private and public life, in church and state, were slowly but surely going on as time passed by. But much of this was superficial and formal rather than profound and vital; and there was still a wide departure in all departments of society from the primitive Christian standard of virtue and piety — a largely prevailing disregard of the perfect law of love to God and man.

We must make a distinction between what may be termed external, conventional morality and the pure, radical, essential morality of the Christ, as I have outlined it. The foul, gross licentiousness, which before the Reformation seemed to send up to heaven its putrid exhalations from the highest as well as lowest places of both church and state throughout the length and breadth of Christendom, had been met by the voice of stern rebuke, and was either partially abated by common consent as

an intolerable nuisance or driven from the public gaze into secret places and haunts of clandestine practice. The several departments of the nominal church, Romish, Greek, and Protestant, assumed the appearance of sanctity in this and other respects, and thenceforth, under various salutary admonitions and chastenings, continually improved in the graces of the Christian life. So much may be granted without forgetting or extenuating the numerous profligacies and iniquities which here and there, more openly or secretly, disgraced the Christian profession. For we must go below the surface in order to clearly understand the actual moral status of the age of which we speak. There were certain fundamental characteristics of a moral and spiritual nature distinguishing it, that were naturally inherited by both Romanists and Protestants from preceding centuries, of which it becomes us in this investigation to take particular notice.

1. A devoted attachment by both parties to the union of church and state. With the honorable exception of a few persecuted persons or sects the entire nominal church stuck tenaciously to this fatal idolatry. The idea that religion could thrive except under the protection and in the fostering care of secular governments, if ever dreamed of, was almost universally scouted as impracticable. Hence all religious parties and classes, with the exceptions alluded to, formed the closest possible alliance with such governments for both offensive and defensive purposes. This involved a virtual confession of moral and spiritual weakness on their

part, a practical reliance upon the scepter, purse, and sword as a dernier resort, and a partizanship with that type of religion which worldly governments represented — a sort of refined brutishness. So the Christianity of the church was demoralized — the Protestant Church like the Roman before it — and its Christianity became really a baptized barbarism. Its theology was barbaric; its piety was barbaric; and its morality partook of the same nature; it was stern, imperious, despotic, arrogant, vindictive.

2. The adoption of the war system as the final arbiter in human affairs was another characteristic of the centuries in review, and an inheritance from the heathenish past. With the exception of the Mennonites, Quakers, and a few others, Protestants and Catholics alike adopted the utterly unchristian principle that "might makes right" in extreme cases, and made carnal weapons their final dependence instead of those spiritual ones "which are mighty through God to the pulling down of the strongholds" of Satan and sin. The essential morality of the war system reverses the most distinguishing precepts of the gospel, and sanctifies the grossest violations of the law of perfect love whenever seeming necessity or convenience dictates. No wonder that Christendom, vitiated by the spirit which this systems engenders, nothwithstanding all the boasts of the friends of the Reformation, was full of contention, violence, wrath, destructiveness, inhumanity.

3. In harmony with this adoption of the war system as a means of accomplishment, and growing

out of it in part, was the widely prevailing domination of brute force, penal vengeance, retaliatory legislation, vindictive punishments, and the various forms of persecution in behalf of religion, which still continued to vex all social and civil relations and keep back the coming of the kingdom of God in the world. All the more popular branches or divisions of the church were more or less intoxicated with this bloody wine of violence and revenge; it animated their lives and characters and controlled their action, not alone in their personal and civic relations, but in ecclesiastical and religious concerns. It stimulated persecution for opinion's sake in the breasts of Protestant as well as in those of Catholic believers. It is curious and instructive to see how ready escaped victims of malice and persecution are to employ them against dissenters from their dicta when they get into power. Thus the Puritans of New England made haste in their wilderness home not only to whip and hang alleged wizards and witches but to ostracise and exterminate innocent but independent Baptists and Quakers. This was but a slight echo of the disabilities and cruelties perpetrated in the old world by religionists in power upon their dissenting co-religionists. Men palliate these atrocities sometimes by attributiug them to "the spirit of the age." The allegation is true. But it would be truer to attribute them to the spirit of that corrupt and barbaric Christianity which was the orthodoxy of that age. With such notions of God, Christ, salvation, atonement, and retribution as then reigned in most

religious circles, persecution was both natural and meritorious. It was Godlike. "If God consigns heretics to endless torture in the world to come," said Queen Mary, "why should not I, as a servant of God, administer like punishment to them, so far as I can, in this world?" And the reasoning was as good for Protestants as for Catholics, and they acted by it. Why should they possess, the power of authority and punishment and not use it to maintain the true religion; to put down heresy, infidelity, and agnosticism?

So in civil affairs. What is civil government for, if not to compel the wayward and wicked to behave; to repress crime by the strong arm; to subject the guilty to penal vengeance even unto death; and thus maintain the dignity of the law, and the divinity of the magistracy! The just doctrine that civil government in its relation to evil doers should be confined to the salutary restraint of those that were dangerous, and to the kindly elevation and reform of all classes of them by moral and religious agencies, now just beginning to be apprehended by humane men and women and to influence legislation and jurisprudence, was scarcely dreamed of in those days. The Christianity of the churches had not risen to that level and we must estimate and judge it accordingly.

4. A glance at the Jesuits and their theories and conduct is needful to a just apprehension of the morality of the centuries in review; such power had they over the fortunes of Christendom. In the early days of the Reformation arose Ignatius

Loyola, a most remarkable man and an intense devotee of the Church of Rome. That church needed such a man to revive its waning power and put new life into its devitalized energies. And this he did; chiefly by founding the famous order of the Jesuits, the most intelligent, enterprising, politic, indomitable, successful society that ever served the Papal or any other hierarchy. These sectarists grew rapidly in numbers and in influence, becoming at length, despite all opposition, innumerable obstacles, and even the antagonism at times of the Pope himself, the very brain, the nervous tissue, the ruling soul of the Catholic branch of the church; "the power behind the throne mightier than the throne." What was the morality of this commanding order? It may be summed up in the maxim, "The end sanctifies the means"; that is, a good object makes all means of success, however reprehensible in themselves, justifiable. The Jesuits did not originate this pernicious doctrine, for men had announced and acted upon it before. But they formally adopted and magnified it, making it the basis of their organic life. They did not monopolize it, for it has been made the rule of conduct by many successful leaders in church and state, and by sectarians and partizans in all ages; our own not excepted. But before all others the Jesuits have proved themselves masters of it.

Starting with the assumption that the Roman was the only true church and that with the Pope at its head it is absolutely infallible, it followed that to obey it, maintain it, promote its prosperity, was

their supreme duty; and this was to be done by whatsoever means, good, bad, or indifferent, they could command. The object in view made them all holy and justifiable. On this principle and to this end they labored — labored diligently and successfully. They employed every agency in their power to accomplish their purpose as servants of the Romish Church; cunning, deceit, perjury, treason, murder, war, — all could be made subservient to their will and used as occasion or opportunity might allow. The grossest offences were pardonable if they contributed to the end in view, and successful iniquity was a virtue. On these lines they wrought — wrought with a persistency and a will only surpassed by their consummate skill. They became all things to all men; in king's houses and the hovels of the peasantry; in institutions of learning and among the ignorant multitude; with friends and with enemies; in every land and country to which they had access. They were ubiquitous in their activities and adepts at every art that could serve their cause. In every sphere of religion, politics, and social life, they plied, in the name of Christ, their special trade. They had no moral principle at heart, but were governed by a crafty expediency that never failed them in any stress to which they were brought. Maintaining an outward appearance of respectability and of professional virtue and piety, they were the secret plotters and abettors of innumerable deeds of darkness and shame, of bitter persecutions and sanguinary battles. Their interior and basic morality in fine was

the most anti-Christian that ever vitiated human character or displayed itself on the arena of human history. And yet it dominated the Roman Church, entered more or less into the practice of Protestantdom, and exerted a widely extended sway in all the complex ranks and circles of society.

But while the moral status of Christendom was on the average what I have represented — still far below that of the New Testament — in many marked respects odious and deplorable, it is to be remembered that the eternal divine providence did not leave it without a powerful countercheck and corrective in the wonderful intellectual development which was all the while going on throughout the civilized world. This was in a large measure independent of the prevailing religious activity, though in no wise hostile to it. It antedated the Reformation, pervaded it, outgrew it to a large extent, becoming at length its sharp-eyed censor, challenging all forms of religious assumption on its part, as well as on the part of the Catholic hierarchy, and bringing all claims, theories, dogmas, of a religious nature, to the test of enlightened reason and a sound judgment. Science, literature, philosophy, independent thought, free inquiry, controversial discussion, engaged the public mind and received constantly increasing consideration. Much of all this, to be sure, was crude, wild, erratic, superficial, and inconclusive, but it was frank, courageous, often audacious and defiant towards religion, which vainly attempted to overawe it and terrify it into deferential modesty. As in later days a conflict

arose and was carried on vigorously between the religious forces of the age and the intellectual — between ecclesiastical assumption and free thought. Religion was characterized by falsities, superstitions, absurdities, and incongruities, which were an offence to the enlightened understanding on the one hand, while on the other the intellectual department of life became conceited, egotistical, self-deific; not infrequently scornful and arrogant towards all forms of faith and piety, counting them all worthy only of execration. There could be no affinity between the two; only warfare when they came in contact with each other. And this warfare was necessary in the nature of things to purge away the dross and excrescences of both parties engaged in it. And this was done to some extent, especially on the side of religion. Not that the intellect was itself blameless and exemplary; not that it had the virtue or the wisdom to establish pure Christianity among men; not that it was free from many of the vices it exposed to public gaze and denounced; but because it was the natural, God-appointed critic of all falsehood and pretension — the arbiter between truth and error, fact and fiction, in all departments of human activity and responsibility. Before its judgment seat religious superstition, assumption, bigotry, and tyranny could be justly arraigned, condemned, made hateful in the sight of all fair-minded men, and religion itself be made to correct itself, in some measure, of its most offensive and reprehensible characteristics.

The distinctive features of the disagreeable but on the whole salutary conflict thus inaugurated were brought to notice most clearly in the literary, social, political, and religious commotions and upheavals of the latter half of the eighteenth century. New sects sprung up in the church under bold polemic leaders; new political theories were promulgated in civil society, producing revolutionary movements that reversed in some cases the currents of history, as in the United States and France; liberty became the popular watchword in both civic and ecclesiastic affairs, and a multitude of panaceas for human ills were devised and proclaimed far and wide among men. A new ardor of philanthropy and humanitarianism was evoked, while skepticism and nothingarianism rose to greater prominence than ever before, and multitudes, under one or another sanction or pretext, broke away from the exactions and restraints of the church altogether. The general tendency of all this was to weaken the union of church and state, make persecution and proscription for opinion's sake more unpopular and assume milder forms, and give the liberal, progressive spirit in all human concerns wider range and a larger empire. The tide thus put in motion has continued to increase in volume and in power ever since and will continue to roll on, no doubt, till everything in nominal Christianity hostile to the primitive Gospel shall have been eliminated and cast as rubbish to the void — till religion as the supreme concern of humanity shall be conformed to the dictates of pure reason, and reason baptized with

the spirit of the Nazarene, shall be in harmony with pure religion, and both as counterparts and helpers of each other shall co-operate with assurance of ultimate success for the redemption of humanity, the triumph of divine truth, and the establishment of the kingdom of God on the earth. And may we all be fellow-laborers together to the same great and blissful consummation.

DISCOURSE XXVII.

THE PREVAILING MORALITY OF CHRISTENDOM IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY.

"Thou sayest, I am rich and increased with goods and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked: I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire that thou mayst be rich and white raiment that thou mayst be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eye-salve that thou mayst see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten; Be zealous therefore and repent." — *Rev.* iii. 17–19.

The moral and spiritual advance and attainment of the nineteenth century are highly extolled by sanguine progressives and equally disparaged by a few extreme conservatives. There can be no doubt of very great improvement over past centuries in the intellectual realm of life and in whatever pertains to the outward, physical circumstances and condition of the masses of mankind. This is obvious in the exact sciences, the practical arts, financial resources; in the comforts and luxuries that may be enjoyed; in modes of travel and national intercommunication; in political ideas and governmental policies; in education and its multiplied institutions and methods; in literature and aesthetic accomplishments; and generally in all the more external

features and elements of what is termed civilization. Corresponding improvement may be seen in the modifications that have taken place in the religious world — the subsidence of the dogmatic spirit, the abandonment or toning down of old creeds and confessions, and the more catholic and kindly attitude of differing sects and parties towards each other. The harsher theological doctrines, the bitterer ecclesiastical warfares, the more rigid exactions of formal piety have been softened most perceptibly but by no means wholly abandoned. All these things are tokens of progress; good as far as they go and worthy of note and commendation.

And in respect to the prevailing morality, with which we are more immediately concerned, careful observation shows that it has become in its external aspects more decorous, kindly, hospitable; that in the particular phase of it which relates to the humanitary side of life, and which expresses itself in institutions and works of benevolence and charity, and in fraternal, sympathetic feelings towards all classes and conditions of people, of whatsoever rank, color, or nationality, there is great change for the better over preceding centuries. And yet it is to be noted that much of what is deemed refinement, benignity, charitableness, is a superficial matter — mere good nature, constitutional amiability, quiescent complacency; having no deep root in the moral sense and possessing no essential value or commanding influence as an element or force of character; and that the more active spirit of philanthropy and good will to all men is limited to

a comparatively small portion of the population, though, without doubt, it magnetizes more or less multitudes of others and raises the average moral status of the community at large and of the world as a whole to a higher level. There can be no question but that progress is the law and condition of humanity on the earth, nor that ample evidences of it are manifest in the present day and generation, as in those gone by.

At the same time it would be untruthfulness to the facts of the case — an act of moral folly and blindness — not to declare openly and unqualifiedly that there is much in modern life — in what is termed civilization — that is vicious, base, corrupt, most reprehensible. And this is true not simply of ignorant, degraded heathendom but of the most advanced, enlightened, professedly Christian lands and peoples. There is still wide divorce between the general morality of Christendom even and that of the unperverted Gospel of Christ; and still is there occasion for the reproof, admonition, and exhortation so impressively embodied in the passage from the utterances of the Seer of Patmos taken for a text. This will appear from a few demonstrative considerations to which I wish to call special attention.

1. The prevalent morality of the nominal Christian world is in a large degree indefinite, elastic, vacillating, time-serving, conventional. It is not a morality of principle, having a basis in the laws of eternal righteousness, and imposing upon men indefeasible and unescapable obligations to duty and

fidelity in all the conduct and in every relation of life. It lacks nerve, fiber, strength, persistency; the heroic, kingly element. It is characterized by vague generalities, and glittering sophisms, and sentimental platitudes, and easy-going virtues of various sort. It rests on temporary expediency, on speculative utility, on respectable and refined selfishness. It is much given to compromise, to diplomacy, to shrewd calculation and artful management. It magnifies the sublime, positive, stringent precepts of the Master it professedly follows, through the pulpit, through ethical orators and authors, through general literature and the public press, but is alas often ready to modify them, qualify them, accommodate them to the pride, selfishness, ambition, and revengeful purposes of men, and to the sectarian and partizan designs of religious zealots and political managers, or to ignore them altogether in the varied affairs of life.

Take for instance a few of the most positive and obligatory of those precepts — those that most distinguish Christianity from all other religions — and reflect how little they enter into the character and dominate the conduct of men; how often they are stigmatized and derided even as visionary, fanciful, Utopian, impracticable; as suited to some other world, or far-off millennial age, but not to the world or age in which our present lot is cast. "He that is greatest among you shall be your servant." "Whosoever humbleth himself as a little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven." "Blessed are the meek." "Blessed are the merciful." "Be-

ware of covetousness." "Ye cannot serve God and mammon." "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." "Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so to them." "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good unto them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father who is in heaven." "Put up thy sword into its place, for all that take the sword shall perish by the sword." "Take my yoke upon you and learn of me." "The son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them." "If ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father shall also forgive you." "Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things that I say?" "Whosoever doth not bear his cross and come after me cannot be my disciple."

The meaning of these and other precepts of similar nature and spirit is obvious and unmistakable. If there were the least chance for doubt, it all would be made clear by the life and example of their author. And if his nominal Church did but observe and illustrate them, it would indeed be "the salt of the earth" and "the light of the world," and mankind would be hastened forward rapidly unto the day of their redemption. But unfortunately its leaders solemnly repeat these transcendent sayings and then proceed to treat them as if they were only vague and glittering generalities, to explain away their evident meaning as their author intended it and as his immediate disciples and early apostles understood it, to accommodate them to the

selfish ambitions of men, to the mammonism of the age, to the popular tastes and fashions, to the existing unfraternal relations of human society, to the manipulations and intrigues of political life, to the assumptions and unchristian policies of civil government, to the demoralizing conventionalities and respectabilities of existing civilization. And in this perversion and abuse of the primitive Gospel of Christ, all parties and sects in the church are co-ordinate actors and fellow-helpers, with a few notable and honorable exceptions. And so by this adulterating and compromising course the church gains more rich and sumptous members to its support, more unscrupulous devotees, more rulers of this world, more military chieftains, more respectability among the multitude, but at the same time a corresponding loss of power to uplift and save men, to regenerate human society and bring in the divine kingdom. It can have splendid sanctuaries, costly choirs, rituals, and other appendages of worship, multiform and attractive instrumentalities for converting the world, which, alas, if converted, would be in essential respects the same selfish, proud, mammon-serving, war-making, blood-shedding world as before — the average genuine morality of it raised scarcely an iota above its present level, scarcely one degree nearer the pure morality of Primitive Christianity.

2. It is instructive as it is striking to note that the morality of nominal Christendom outside of what may be termed ecclesiastical exemplariness is not only much the same in all divisions of the

church, Catholic and Protestant, (with the multitudinous subdivisions of the latter), but is little if any higher than that of the great company of the unchurched. By ecclesiastical exemplariness (a designation of my own devising) I mean that sort of religious deportment which each denomination or sect exacts of its members in order to be "in good and regular standing." Much of this exists in external pietism, ceremonial observance, conformity to established customs, and is of the nature of disciplinary drill service, which must be decently regarded in order not to lose caste and be on terms of good fellowship. Thus Sabbath-keeping, attendance upon public worship, participation in the ordinances, in the forms and attitudes of devotion, paying tribute for the support of denominational activities, the avoidance of practices deemed improper or scandalous — these things in the average church of our day constitute what I call ecclesiastical exemplariness. Now much of this external and ceremonial service, though counted oftentimes for righteousness, however valuable in its way as helpful to a better life, is no part of character; is not of the nature of actual morality, strictly so called, and has no spiritual value whatever in itself considered. It may be a means of promoting pure morality if sincerely and conscientiously used to that end. Otherwise, it may be but a dry and innutritious husk, or, like the drill of an army, a disciplinary exercise essential to the efficiency of the organization exacting it; it may be but a mask of pretended virtue and piety — a

snare and a cheat to the soul. Thus one may observe all holy sacraments and go through all the exercises and motions required by any given ecclesiastical order, and yet be thoroughly worldly and selfish and even brutal in spirit and in conduct; covetous and extortionate, morose, haughty, and tyrannical, heartless, cruel, and vindictive, given to sharp practices, deceits, and unjust transactions with his fellow-men. I therefore leave mere ecclesiastical exemplariness for what it may be really worth as determined by its results in improving human character and uplifting human life; asserting simply that, aside from this, the solid, well grounded, trustworthy, abiding morality of Christendom is much the same in all divisions and subdivisions of the nominal church and in no marked degree higher than than that of the outside world. Why should it be? For, as before stated, it is gauged on every side by the same standards that determine the ethical code of current civilization and is co-ordinated with that worldly expediency and calculating policy which play such a controlling part in the great drama of social and civil life, in all communities, states, and nations, the wide world over. The standing policy of the church as a whole, though we find a few rare exceptions, seems to be to keep abreast of the morality of the established civil order as represented in its legislation and jurisprudence, but not to outrun it to any noticeable extent. This was illustrated in the history of those great reforms which abolished the infamous slave-trade, chattel slavery itself, and serf-

dom in the old world, and the two former in our own country. So long as the laws of the land and executive and judicial authorities based upon them sanctioned and upheld those great abominations, agitations for their overthrow were commenced and carried forward by philanthropic parties either wholly outside the church or independent of ecclesiastical organizations. But no sooner had these parties so informed the public mind and aroused the public conscience that the political mechanism began to be affected thereby, and that state action began to take place, than the great ecclesiastical bodies awoke from their drowsiness, girt themselves about with weapons of warfare, entered the field of conflict and shared with the noble company of original reformers the honors of the final victory. Some of those bodies were so ignorant of the facts of the case or so blinded by the smoke of battle, or so warped in moral judgment by prejudice and sectarian conceit, that they thought themselves the only or the chief combatants on the field and that to them chiefly if not wholly was the triumph due. And this brings me to another point in this investigation not to be overlooked.

3. I wish to call attention to the virtual union which still exists between church and state, or the relation of the morality of the present century to the civil government of the several nations of the earth. This formerly existing organic union of the ecclesiastical and political powers of different countries has been greatly modified and in some instances entirely dissolved by the augmenting force

of rational inquiry and an intelligent understanding joined to the increasing demand for civil and religious liberty among the foremost peoples of the earth. The profession and boast in our own land is that we have made an entire separation of the two and placed religion and the morality associated with it on a purely voluntary basis of support. And yet nearly all our religious societies and institutions are incorporated under governmental authority, thus securing the privilege of calling to their aid, if deemed needful or desirable, the arm of the law and even of the penal and military force lying back of it, for the purpose of collecting their revenues, resisting unjust exactions, and carrying into effect such measures as they may adopt for the promotion of the objects they desire to accomplish. It is curious to see how large a proportion of our religious leaders, special reformers, and philanthropists in general, even those of high profession, beginning whatever work of renewal, uplifting, and purification they undertake with rational and persuasive appeals to the understandings, the consciences, and all the higher sentiments of human nature, sooner or later fall into the notion that very considerable reliance must be placed upon political methods and legislative enactments for the consummation of their plans and projects, and proceed to act accordingly. They sometimes assume the role of advisers, censors, and directors of the civil administration of affairs, laboring to secure such laws, such decisions of the courts, such use of the scepter of state and of executive power as

they judge necessary to remove the evil they denounce and to establish the righteousness they would build up among men. And if they do not succeed to their minds in this attitude of counsellor and admonitor, they enter actively into the arena of political wrangling and strife, trying their hand at forming or manipulating parties, at controlling conventions and building platforms, at the various devices of shrewdness and chicanery which are so much the stock in trade of politicians and aspirants for place and power in these days, in order that they may the more effectually secure the ends they have in view; in order that they may make the state their partner and their backer in their various undertakings. They do not seem to suspect that the principle upon which they act is essentially the same as that which underlies all forms of church and state union; a principle which makes the church practically subservient to the state; involving, as it does, a confession of inability on the part of the church to carry on its own work in its own way to a finally successful issue, and of the necessity of relying upon outside aid — the strong arm of civil authority and governmental power to accomplish the objects for the promotion of which it claims to have been divinely established and ordained. This is abandoning the means and methods which Jesus universally employed in his time to advance his cause and kingdom; it is surrendering spiritual weapons in the warfare with the world the flesh and the devil for carnal ones; it is putting the morality which the church claims to

represent largely into the keeping of political managers, partizan leaders, ambitious office-seekers, who naturally and inevitably pervert and corrupt it. In this way the average morality of the nineteenth century is simply the morality of such unscrupulous and often notoriously vicious manipulators, and of necessity is far below that of the perfect Nazarene.

4. We will now glance at the morality of Christendom in the present age as represented in religious persecution, in vindictive penalties for crime, and in the continued war system of the world. The first of these has been so cowered and crippled by opposing influences — by the growing intelligence of mankind and the triumph of free and untrammeled thought, and so softened by the increasing humanity and catholicity which enter into all departments of human life, that it ventures to raise its cobra head only here and there for a moment in the more benighted portions of the earth. Nevertheless, its venomous spirit still lives and would repeat in some directions its old cruelties, if it dared. But it is generally content to appear in milder forms than in other days; in the form of excommunication, proscription, denunciation,— sometimes of misrepresentation, calumny, and abuse. Bigotry is not wholly a thing of the past, and claims to the exclusive favor of God and privileges of heaven are still sometimes heard. The Catholic Church still regards the Protestant as a deplorable if not damnable heresiarch, and from time to time presents overtures for its return to its own bosom that it may find there safety, peace, and blessed-

ness. The older Protestant denominations, though becoming more tolerant and courteous towards the more liberal ones, are hardly ready to grant them the Christian name and allow that they have an equal chance with themselves to an inheritance with the sanctified on high. As a matter of fact the time is not yet very near at hand when the Saviour's prayer, "that they all may be one; as thou Father art in me and I in thee that they may be one in us," will be fully answered.

As to unmerciful, vindictive, and brutal punishments, I am happy to say that they have been much decreased in number and much lessened in barbarity since the century began. Indeed, in most civilized lands they have been almost wholly divested of deliberate and needless torture. Public sentiment in general leans towards mercy in the punishment of criminals, sometimes perhaps towards laxity, if they be fashionable, wealthy, influential ones. Much more attention is paid of late years to the prevention of vice and crime than formerly, and to the reformation of those guilty of offences against the public welfare, and more interest is taken in discharged convicts and those desirous of reform, to have them placed under salutary influences and helped to a better life. Nevertheless, there yet remains in the community a vast amount of vindictiveness towards the law-breaking classes, and the guillotine, the gallows, and the electrocutor's chair still drip with the blood of those slaughtered under the statute by man's inhumanity to man. The great majority of people have not

yet learned that Satan cannot cast out Satan; that evil can be overcome only by good. Large numbers go armed with deadly weapons, prepared to act upon the principle of "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, wounding for wounding and blow for blow," though Christ's commands positively forbid doing so; and lynch-law brutalities and race quarrels and assassinations are not infrequent in divers sections of our own land.

War, as a means of redressing grievances, settling difficulties, and dealing with enemies generally, has become less frequent, is better regulated, and, in certain respects, is not so virulent and savage as formerly. But it has not been renounced or outgrown. On the contrary, the custom never since time began had such widely extended and lavish support as now. And Christendom, to its dishonor, shame, and condemnation, be it said, has become more warlike than all other portions of the earth. The great battles of the century have been fought *by* Christian peoples and mostly *with* Christian peoples. Never since the great apostasy against the primitive peace doctrine of Jesus in the third century have Christian nations exhibited such devotion to military force and armed intervention or resistance as today. At this moment they have more brain, muscle, science, destructive enginery, pecuniary capital, invested in the war system than ever before. And the wars of this century have been among the most gigantic ones of history. Moreover, the greatest apologists for and defenders of war have been of recent birth. Even professed

advocates of peace sometimes plead that the way to peace is through war! A little more righteous bloodshed and then; yes, *then*, the millennium!

And the nominal church spreads holy hands over this murderous system and gives it sanctity and prestige and further lease of life. Its chaplains lend it their prayers, invoke God's blessing on either and both sides in every death-dealing conflict, offer up thanksgivings over battles won, and fast and lament in times of defeat, imploring the Father of mercies to reverse the fortunes of the sanguinary field and give the victory to the other side. So does the barbarism of war continue, and so is the morality of the nineteenth century characterized and degraded by this "grossest outrage on the principles of Christianity."

5. And if we were to consider for a moment in a general way the actual condition of society even in the most favored lands we should have an object lesson throwing a flood of light upon the subject in hand, and showing how far removed the morality of today is from that of the pure Gospel of our Lord. Behold the ignorance, the unequality, the selfishness, the intemperance, the sensuality, and shame that exist in all our large cities, and to a lamentable extent, throughout our own and other lands; behold the appalling contrasts in modern civilization of wealth and poverty, of luxury and want, of comfort and discomfort, of contentment and unrest, of happiness and misery; behold the allurements of gilded and fascinating evils, the temptations to vice and crime, the dens of inquity,

the vestibules of perdition, that so plentifully abound; behold the antagonisms that prevail — bitter and unrelenting oftentimes — between different classes of the population — between the rich and poor, between capital and labor, between employer and employed; behold the cunning craftiness, the chicanery and wire-pulling of common politics, the scramble for office, the traffic in votes, and the intrigues of legislation; behold the jealousy and distrust, the spirit of animosity and wrath, the unreason and conceit that characterize the nations of the earth, making enemies of those who "else like kindred drops would mingle into one"; behold how the strong tyrannize over the weak and defenceless, how legislators enact injustice into law, how politicians shelter bribery and corruption, how nations provide for and prosecute the work of human slaughter regardless of the suffering and distress occasioned thereby; — behold all these things and consider how opposed they are to the pure, loving, fraternal teachings of the Master, and how defective and blameworthy is the morality which makes such things possible compared with that of Primitive Christianity — how much it needs to be elevated and improved before it can be said in any large and truthful way that "God's kingdom has come" and that "His will is done on earth as it is in heaven."

It might be asked if I have no credit to give to the multiform activities of church life, or to the numerous benevolent, humane, reformatory societies outside, most of which have arisen during this

century and are designed to relieve and bless the suffering and sorrowing classes. Yes, much credit, for they deserve it. But not all that is sometimes claimed for them. No one of them nor all together represent or propose to promote a symmetrical, complete, Christlike righteousness. They are all and each of them more or less partial and defective — more or less vitiated by a compromising spirit, and so not worthy of unqualified commendation. Were the world to become like them it would still be far from the kingdom of God. I therefore look for something higher, nobler, more perfect, more Christlike, to come. God speed its advent.

DISCOURSE XXVIII.

GENERAL SUMMARY AND APPLICATORY REFLECTIONS.

"If ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish." "But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace." *James* iii. 14, 17, 18.

In the preceding discourses of the series comprised in this volume I have endeavored to portray and elucidate the simple, unadulterated personal righteousness of Primitive Christianity in its two natural branches of piety and morality, and to set forth in contrast therewith the corruptions of the same made by the nominal Christian Church and represented in Christendom from the second or third century to the nineteenth inclusive. In this closing one of the number, I will, without retracing the steps taken in detail, present a general summary of my exposition of the subject that has engaged our attention, and conclude with a few applicatory reflections.

I. General Summary. In my review of what is virtually the history of Christianity as it has mani-

fested itself in the world for sixteen hundred years, I have established, at least to my own satisfaction, the following definitely stated positions, to wit: 1. That the primitive Christian piety and morality were pre-eminently higher and more perfect than any type or portraiture of personal righteousness embodying those two fundamental elements ever otherwise commended to mankind; containing the good of others without their defects or evils, and transcending them in completeness and crowning excellences. 2. That the perfect personal righteousness taught, enjoined, and exemplified by Jesus Christ became gradually and increasingly corrupted, ignored, and trampled under foot by the nominal church from the second or third century downward to the time of the so-called Protestant Reformation under Martin Luther and his distinguished coadjutors. 3. That while a powerful reaction then took place in the direction of a return to the original teachings of the New Testament Scriptures, and while substantial and highly commendable progress has been achieved in the same direction since that memorable uprising, especially during the present century, there is still most notable and irreconcilable divergence in both church and state, theoretically and practically, from some of the most essential and distinctive precepts and principles of the Prophet of Nazareth. 4. That the only hope of ultimate regeneration, holiness, and happiness for mankind on the earth, individually, socially, and universally, lies in casting off these corruptions and perversions, returning to the primitive Gospel stand-

ard of truth and righteousness, and reconstructing the church on the moral and spiritual basis — the Rock of ages — which constituted its foundation when it first started out on its mission of redemption to the world.

II. Applicatory Reflections. 1. Assuming that I have borne witness to important truths, and borne it faithfully, the first reflection is involved in the inquiry, Who hath believed my report? or, Who cares for it and will profit thereby? Is anything to be expected, at present, from the leading spirits, the rulers of the nominal church, but indifference or perhaps contempt for such a witness and for such testimonies? Little more. Those who occupy high places in Zion have no special regard or love for him who discloses their malfeasance in office, whether through ignorance or treachery, and brings them into condemnation. It is essentially the same with such today as it was with the high priests and scribes of the time of Christ. Pope, cardinals, archbishops, and prelates of every degree in the Romish and Greek communions; Episcopal, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Baptist, Methodist, Unitarian, Universalist, and denominational leaders generally in Protestantdom — alike wise in their own conceits, and well-enough-to-do in their easy positions — are quite willing to be ignorant of such testimonies as I publish abroad, or, if casually informed of them, are likely to thrust them aside with vituperation or a sneer. And the great mass of their reverential and deferential subordinates — the laity — are expected, as they are inclined, to follow in their wake.

"Why, then," it may be asked, "bring these backslidings, perversions, abuses to light, denouncing them and testifying against them?" Because the Holy Spirit of truth impels me in all loyalty to do so. Because there is a remnant in the earth who have not bowed the knee to the Baal of an emasculated and disorted Christianity, who will be encouraged to hear, consider, resolve, and act aright, and whose numbers will be multiplied by such testimonies and appeals. Because woes are coming on them that are at reprehensible ease in Zion; they are to be deprived of unhallowed power and advantage; they are to be criticised, exposed, and brought to confusion by the growing intelligence of men; they are ultimately to be winnowed as with a fan and purged as with fire; the heavens are to be shaken over their heads and the earth made to quake beneath their feet, till their errors and falsities became utterly hateful to them and are disowned and cast off forever. In those days will such counsels as mine be precious to them as "the fine gold of Ophir," and help them to gain some sure refuge from the impending doom. Therefore I cannot refrain from a duty so imperative and yet now so thankless. There is a future for me and my cause.

2. Another reflection is that I have no more favorable reception to expect for my testimonies from self-styled liberals outside the church — rationalists, transcendentalists, scientists, spiritists, and skeptics generally — than is accorded them by professing Christians themselves, of high and low degree.

Why not? Because my essential Gospel is to them foolishness; they belittle if they do not despise its very foundation, Jesus Christ being the chief corner stone. The Prophet of Galilee is no divine teacher to them, and his declarations and requirements have no conclusive authority. They are supremely conscious of their own sufficiency and feel the need of no such help as he has to offer for their instruction, guidance, comfort, salvation, peace, and joy. At the same time they have no essentially higher, nobler, more perfect ethical system to propose for the acceptance and governance of mankind than the degenerate church furnishes — a linsey-woolsey moral philosophy and a sword-sustained, blood-shedding civilization. Besides, it is not the genius of these several classes of persons to build up the perfect thought and life in individuals or in society and among the nations, but to overthrow and destroy the imperfect; — to criticise, find fault with, and bring into disrepute, doctrines, customs, institutions, which they have neither the wisdom nor virtue to supersede with better ones. So for the present I hope for nothing more from all such than to see their partial, destructive, inadequate efforts overruled by divine providence for the gradual elimination from human affairs of ecclesiastical and religious assumption, bigotry, misconception, perversity, and corruption. When they have fulfilled this mission, undesignedly and unconsciously on their part, and find how unsatisfactory such a use of time, talent, energy is, they will then, perchance, like starved prodigals, seek after that true bread of

Heaven which Christ evermore giveth to those who hunger and thirst for it; even that righteousness which he taught and exemplified and which is for the healing of the nations and the redemption of the world. I therefore cherish no vain expectations of good from this quarter, but sow, while my day lasts, the seed of the kingdom and wait unto the fulness of times for the surely coming harvest.

3. Another reflection which weighs on my mind is in the form of an impression — an inspiration, as it were, from the unseen world, that sometime in the not far distant future, a radical reconstruction of the Christian church must be commenced on the basis of the original one as the Apostles founded it — a reconstruction which shall separate it entirely from all existing ecclesiastical and political organizations, and so relieve it of all demoralizing and blameworthy compromise with whatever is anti-Christian or un-Christian in their structure, polity, or adminstration. This work of establishing the church anew on its original foundations cannot be inaugurated without suitable material for the superstructure. The number of those entering into this work need not be large, but each one of the number must be an intelligent, thoroughly determined, and consecrated convert to the principles of pure, practical Christianity, and as thoroughly imbued with its spirit of perfect love to God and man; and must be willing and ready, at whatever sacrifice, to stand by the undertaking through good report and ill report till the consummation be achieved. Each one participating in the enterprise

must understand what it is in its fundamental and vital characteristics, as contrasted with a contaminated and false Christianity and with an unchristianized civilization. Ignorance, confusion, and moral faithlessness will not serve the end in view but rather imperil it. Its co-workers must each and all be willing to acknowledge its distinctive principles of theology, piety, and morality; not from selfish motives or social constraint; not because enjoined and required; but from full, free, hearty conviction and a conscience void of offence. All must be united in the bonds of a true fellowship of the spirit, so as to act together with one accord in whatever is calculated to advance the common cause, and must hold their union above all things sacred and indissoluble. Their church and what it represents of truth, of righteousness, of honor, of fidelity to God and man, must always take precedence of any other human interest or institution that comes into competition with it; must not be made subservient or secondary to any association or movement that would thrive at its expense. Neither extreme individualism, nor personal antagonism, nor any pretended religious, moral, philanthropic, or social specialty, must be allowed to weaken the bonds that join the members to each other or impair their efficiency as fellow-laborers together with God for human uplifting and sanctification. Otherwise, the whole thing will prove a sham and a failure. It were better to postpone such a radical reconstructive undertaking a thousand years than attempt it with incoherent materials on a

foundation of sand. Such a church would never be a detriment to existing civil government, nor its submissive slave, nor a time-serving sycophant fawning at its feet, but a self-regulating, self-supporting, self-sacrificing antetype and fore-runner of a true Christian civilization — a veritable kingdom of God on earth, as its great Founder intended undoubtedly that his church should be.

4. One other reflection comes to my mind; and that is the necessity of avoiding the mistake of trusting too much to fragmentary, special moral reform societies or movements, having as an object some one particular evil to overcome and put away or some one good cause to promote and make triumphant. They are but partial in their scope, at the best, and often superficial in their purpose, having no deep, radical, comprehensive principles as the bed-rock basis of their action. They are not infrequently of a semi-political character and exceedingly liable to resort to the customary compromise and chicanery of political life in order to secure the ends they have in view. They are often composed of heterogeneous elements consorting together for a single given purpose, but agreeing in scarcely anything beside. They may make great professions, magnify the importance of their distinctive work and would fain have us believe that the success of their efforts will be the dawning or the full-risen day of the millennium. Let no one be misled by such representations or caused to think that their way is the only or the chief way to regenerate and transform humanity. Whoever trusts in them

for any great, comprehensive redemptive work, or in their methods as the means of curing the manifold ills of humanity and of establishing the reign of brotherhood and peace on the earth, will be disappointed; and whoever expends his time, thought, energy, strength exclusively upon them with the expectation that by so doing he is rendering the only or the most effectual service of God and man possible, will sooner or later, in this or some coming world, find that he was in serious error and that much of his effort was spent to little purpose. They are in their very nature unequal to so great and sublime a work as Primitive Christianity proposes to accomplish in the world, and their methods are, in the ordinary course of human procedure and under existing circumstances, equally limited and inadequate. They all, I concede, have their uses, do more or less good, help on in greater or less degree the better time coming, fill a place in the redemptive plan of the eternal providence of God. But they have not that breadth of purpose, that strength of principle, that weight of character, that uncompromising spirit, that reliance upon moral and spiritual agencies necessary to the accomplishment of the proposed regeneration of the Christian church and world.

5. Another reflection is suggested by the inquiry, whether, after all, we ought not to put a higher estimate than we have done upon the moral influence exerted by the church as a whole, through the multiform denominations, sects, parties represented therein, for the restoration of the original

morality of the Gospel and the ultimate triumph of Primitive Christianity among men. Perhaps so, but I do not see it. I see that all these religious bodies, in co-operation with other beneficent agencies alluded to, have important uses in the general system of things, and, notwithstanding serious shortcomings and even trangressions against truth and righteousness, are made under divine wisdom to subserve most desirable ends. But viewed as direct and all-sufficient means to the supreme object in view, I deem them radically impotent and ineffectual.

In the first place they are each and all rendered insensible of the necessity of any such profound, vital transformation as this entire discussion involves, by the spirit of undoubting self-satisfaction with which they are possessed; and this not only paralyzes effort but utterly disqualifies them for efficient service in its behalf. They already have, in their own esteem, all essential Gospel truth, and why should they trouble themselves with any call or cause which implies that they have not; they already maintain and represent, in their own opinion, all the piety and virtue that is at present practicable, and why should they devote time, energy, effort, to attain anything different? Why attempt impossibilities? Surely enough, why should they? Granting their premises, based upon their conceit, and their conclusion is inevitable. So that on that ground, nothing definite, positive, effectual is to be hoped from them.

And then, again, the whole theological system upon which the vast majority of these religious

organizations is based, — the theory of life, duty, and destiny which underlies and animates, in large degree, their varied activities, furnishing end and motive of all endeavor, is not consonant with or friendly to that universal holiness and happiness of mankind that I magnify and commend as the crowning object of human study and pursuit. Note some of its distinctive characteristics. A ruined world, doomed to everlasting punishment; an offended Deity, who will not and cannot save to the uttermost; an atonement in Christ's sacrifice which, though it may be offered to all, is limited to a few — to those only who by faith accept it in this life; an endless hell of hopeless agony and despair for all beside, the great majority of the human race; deliverance from this impending, never-ending doom, "the chief concern of mortals here below"; and fear of it the leading motive to an orderly, upright, holy, devout life. Now, the divine economy of the world thus characterized, upon which the belief, thought, and conduct of the vast majority of professing Christians ecclesiastically rests, is either true or false. If true, then all I have said about the Fatherhood of God, his loving interest in all his human children, his disposition and ability to save them all from sin and to perfect them in righteousness, is false and misleading; as is all my teaching concerning Christ as a great moral and religious teacher and divinely appointed leader in this work of universal human redemption. And as is also what I have declared to be the foundation truths upon which is built the resplen-

dent superstructure of primitive Christian morality as I have outlined and described it. But if the divine economy of the dominant churches of Christendom be false, then my testimonies are sound, trustworthy, and invulnerable. In either case, those churches are obviously disqualified and incompetent for the work of moral and religious reconstruction for which I pray, labor, and suffer reproach.

And as to the more rational, liberal, humane sects, whose theological doctrines and theories are more accordant with what I propose, they are so few in numbers and so limited in resources and influence that they are but as small dust in the balance when compared with the great mass of Christian believers and with the manifold other denominations of Christendom. Moreover, they are more or less affected by that feeling of self-complacency and habit of self-adulation which checks energy and restrains effort in the direction of radical reform and reconstruction on a higher level than that occupied by them; while their faith in, complicity with, and subserviency to the political and military systems and policies of the nations of the earth, constitute a sort of background to their entire denominational and religious life. For these reasons little more reliance can be placed upon them in their organic capacity for the proposed transformation of the Christian world than upon their more orthodox fellow-devotees.

6. A final reflection, of the gravest importance it seems to me, arises as we draw this discussion to a close, relating to the line of duty which should

be pursued by those honestly believing in and thoroughly committed to the principles and ideas proclaimed in these discourses, during the period that must in the nature of the case intervene before the work of actual reconstruction of the church can be commenced. That period will necessarily be a transitional one, characterized by the unsettling of long-cherished theories and opinions, the breaking up and discarding of old customs and methods of administration, and the discussing, formulating, and adopting of new ones suited to the more perfect dispensation of the truth and grace that came by Jesus Christ. It will be a period of considerable length, continuing through scores of years, perhaps centuries. For such radical and comprehensive reforms as that contemplated and prophesied are not accomplished in a moment. No sudden and mighty upheaval can bring them to pass. They can only be realized after long-protracted. patient, earnest, thoughtful study, research, constructive effort, and possibly repeated experimentation.

But what, I ask, are those of us who see the importance of this reconstruction, and who are ourselves we fain believe ready for it, to do meanwhile? We are few in numbers, and powerless, so far as any outward, positive movement to realize our ideal is concerned, against the vast multitudes who are satisfied with what now is, or who, at least, feel no necessity of conscience or of divine requirement laid upon them to strike out boldly for anything radically different and more in accord with the primitive type of church organization and

administration. I will endeavor to state from my stand-point what we are to do — what we can do and what we can not or ought not do. We can not be the unqualified, subservient, acquiescing devotees of any existing denomination, sect, or party in church or state; for the reason that they are each and all more or less defective in respect to the essentials of Primitive Christianity — are more or less involved in the practical denial or open violation of those essentials. But some are much less so than others, and at the same time much less disposed to hold their members to a stringent fealty to denominational, sectarian, or partisan views and methods — much more tolerant of individual convictions and scruples, and much more willing to grant entire freedom of thought and utterance, even to the extent of open dissent, to those whom they welcome to their ranks and fellowship. Some, indeed, are nominally committed to the idea of human progress, readily confessing that there is more light to break forth from the divine word, and regarding favorably whatever is proclaimed or done in the name of reform and for the bettering of the condition of mankind. When association and co-operation with such can be gained and maintained without compromising principle or abandoning the cause of church reconstruction, as I think may sometimes be the case, it is well to take advantage of them. In so doing one may have the opportunity of accomplishing much good in directions and along lines opened for the prosecution of moral, social, philanthropic,

religious activities of various sort, and wholly unobjectionable, and also of testifying to and disseminating those higher truths and principles which have been revealed to him, and so helping to promote the great object which he will ever keep in view as the ultimate aim of all his endeavors and desires.

Otherwise, if no such denomination, sect, or party, can be found granting cordially this large liberty and this unobjectionable privilege, then complete independence should be assumed and maintained, whatever the present privations or inconveniences — whatever misunderstanding, reproach, or calumny may be incurred thereby. So Christ himself did, and no one can go far astray who, under similar circumstances, walks in the footsteps of the great Exemplar. No true man or woman receiving the doctrines taught in these discourses and seeking to promote the sublime ends and aims herein set forth, can afford to enter into any entangling or compromising alliances whereby he will be proven false to his own best convictions, false to his acknowledged leader, and false to his God, thus losing his self-respect, his moral power, his very soul. Nor can one afford to hide his light under a bushel or obscure it with mists and clouds by submissive, unquestioning fellowship with others in a confederation or society which sanctions, consents to, or even tolerates the falsities, abuses, and corruptions which have characterized the ecclesiastical, social, and political life of Christendom for the past sixteen hundred years. To do

so is treason to Christ and to the cause of human regeneration. Nothing can be more ignoble than to join a company or go with the multitude to do evil, or to maintain any doctrine, custom, or institution known to be contrary to the truths and requirements of Primitive Christianity. To do this may be popular, may win the applause of the crowd, may secure many worldly advantages, but it would be basely wicked. By standing alone and independent for conscience's and principle's sake, we maintain a testimony which may not avail much in our own day and generation, but which will tell in the long run and with succeeding generations for the advancement of the truth we cherish and the enfranchisement and sanctification of the world. It may be impossible for us just now to convert others to our high and sacred standard of duty, or even to induce any considerable number to hear or read and consider our reasons for the faith that is in us; but one thing we can do, God helping us, and that is *maintain our own individual integrity.* If the world turn a deaf ear to our testimonies and appeals; if it sneer at, or curse, or persecute us, let us trust in God and defy all threatened evil consequences. Pursuing this course we do the best thing that can be done, under the circumstances, to arrest the attention of noble-minded men and women striving to serve God and save humanity, to commend our distinctive views of truth and duty to pure, generous, Christlike souls, and so to prepare the way for the coming of a regenerate church and of the divine kingdom to the world. Thus dis-

charging our whole duty, as we see our duty, we shall satisfy our own consciences and find acceptance with Him who judgeth righteously; and our labors, humble though they be and counted of little worth by the wise and prudent of this world, shall, under the sheltering care of the eternal providence, be made to contribute their appropriate share to the grand consummation.

With these reflections, which constitute the larger part of the present discourse, I close this, the second volume of my general Exposition of Primitive Christianity and its Corruptions during the successive periods that have transpired since Jesus of Nazareth went about preaching the Gospel of a better life to the children of men. Whosoever will profit by what I have said, let him profit; and whosoever will deride and scorn it, let him do so at his own risk of loss and condemnation — setting forth and making evident, if he can, a more excellent way for the attainment of the transcendent object in view, the inauguration of that long-prayed-for era when "God's kingdom shall have come and His will be done on earth as it is in heaven." In His own time, I have no doubt, will the infinite Father, in whose name and under whose inspiration I have spoken, vindicate my testimonies and make them effectual by His unfailing wisdom for the advancement of the cause of truth in the world and the furtherance of His infinite purpose of good concerning the children of men. And so, while to me is given the honor and the reward of the service I render, to Him, for all the beneficent results

accomplished and for the victory finally won, shall be the glory forever.

In my third and last volume of this series I propose to declare, expound, and defend the distinctive Ecclesiastical Polity and Social Order inculcated and enjoined by pure Primitive Christianity.

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